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Narratives of the Development of Urban Teacher Leaders

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Susan K. Newsom entitled "Narratives of the Development of Urban Teacher Leaders." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

J. Amos Hatch, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Susan Benner, Pamela Angelle, Blanche O'Bannon

Accepted for the Council:
Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Narratives of the Development of Urban Teacher Leaders

A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Susan Kirkland Newsom
May 2010

Dedication

For my husband, John Newsom, and children, Ann and Liz Newsom, you are the loves of my life and the joys of my heart. Thank you so much for your love, patience and willingness to allow me to forge this adventure.

For my parents, Roy and Dorothy Kirkland, who provided examples and expectations as true educators, I love you and I appreciate you more than you will ever know.

For my grandparents, Geneva and Robert Lynn Rauls and Frankie Jo and Roy Kirkland, Sr., who recognized the importance of an education. Their love and sacrifice continues to be an inspiration.

Acknowledgements

To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.
Anatole France

The development of this project could not have been realized without the support of my family members, mentors, and friends. To them I am deeply appreciative.

First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee chair, J. Amos Hatch, for his willingness to guide me in the exploration of qualitative research. His expertise, patience, thoughtful consideration of practices, and pacing of my process, while maintaining a humanistic approach to me as a person, are deeply appreciated and should be a model for all to follow.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my committee members, Susan Benner, Pamela Angelle, and Blanche O'Bannon, for their time and critical eye and for the standards they maintain in promoting academic excellence. I would like to extend a special note of gratitude to Dr. O'Bannon for her kindness and willingness to step into a role that was left vacant by the death of Dr. Ed Counts.

To the trinity of dear friends who have offered supportive notes, provided shoulders to cry on, endured tirades of frustration, challenged my perspectives on situations, and believed in me even when they didn't have to, I want to humbly thank Gina Barclay-McLaughlin, Karen Walker, and Shari Lillestolen for their wise insights and never failing friendships.

The participants of this study are owed a huge debt of gratitude for their courage, honesty, and willingness to give of themselves so others may learn and grow. They are true leaders.

To Linda Ducamp and Patty Stinger-Barnes, your level of support and encouragement was invaluable.

And finally, to all my family members who kept encouraging, prodding, and supporting me, thank you for your love and patience.

To all of the above, thank you for your beliefs in me so that I could realize a dream.

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the development of urban elementary teacher leaders as captured in narrative data and analyzed through the theoretical lenses of role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership and urban teacher leadership. The narratives of five teacher leaders provided rich descriptions that made it possible to: (a) examine possible mechanisms for encouraging leadership assertion choices; (b) identify support practices for encouraging leadership within future teachers in the urban context; and (c) provide insight for building leadership roles in the school environment for those who coordinate professional development activities.

Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and post-interview reflections over the course of three months. All of the participants in the study worked in urban settings for the duration of the study and were employed by the same school system in the southeastern United States. Narrative analysis, analysis of narratives and a cross-case analysis strategies were used to reveal participants' perceptions of individual roles, their journeys of leadership development, and the influences of their experiences in urban contexts on their leadership choices. Recommendations were made to enhance preparation, mentoring, and professional development of potential and current urban teacher leaders.

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

> We are coming to believe that leaders are those people who "walk ahead," people who are genuinely committed to deep change in themselves and in their organizations. They lead through developing new skills, capabilities, and understandings. And they come from many places within the organization. (Senge, 1996, p. 45)

Introduction

PC, or plot and connive, became our motto as we began to feel a sense of empowerment in our collective efforts to influence school and leadership practices. Almost like a game, our inner-circle of teachers chose to meet informally in hallways, at the lunch table, or in empty classrooms after school to brainstorm and think together about ways to resolve issues and address concerns. Commenting to each other that the PC Committee was meeting, we verbally cued our trusted members that we needed to talk. These conversations were exercises in brainstorming, collective thinking, and strategic planning.

Begun as a need to socialize, vent frustrations, problem-solve, and develop strategies to "help" the new principal, this committee of seven ultimately evolved into a formally selected school leadership team that the principal began to trust as a resource in making school decisions. Empowered and viewed as influential teachers in the school, we knew that raising our voices, giving input, and challenging mandates was critical to how we envisioned "our school" ought to be. How we delivered the curriculum was important to our students' interest and performance. What we taught was important to their academic success. How we established relationships with our students was critical

to garnering the support of parents and ensuring their involvement in our learning community. What we shared with administration was an effort to give constructive feedback to support decisions to make "our school" the best learning environment possible. We realized that all school decisions were important because we knew the results would ultimately trickle down to us, the teachers, and impact our students. We needed to be heard and our care, interest, and proactive involvement in school activities were our permission slips to be a part of the communication and leadership process.

This early experience in my teaching career deeply influenced me and has generated in me an appreciation for collaborating, creating professional networks, feeling empowered, and knowing my voice can contribute to student and school achievement. As a former teacher leader and school administrator, I have witnessed over the course of my professional career the significance and impact of teacher leadership in schools. Now as a teacher educator, the importance of having a grounded understanding in theory, research, and practice is critical for my own knowledge as I model, teach and lead novice educators in the beginning stages of their professional development. I strongly believe to progress in my growth as a teacher educator, I should explore the theories and research related to teacher leadership development and study the conditions by which certain teachers are prompted to engage in formal and informal leadership roles. Understanding why some teachers presume to step outside their traditional teaching roles and seek out other responsibilities is a phenomenon that I will explore in this study.

This is a qualitative study of urban elementary teacher leaders' narratives. Through this study, inner motivations, career choices, and context- specific experiences

will offer insight into their professional journeys and give voice to their stories as influenced by the complexities of the urban context. It is imperative that urban teacher leaders are given opportunities to share their stories of everyday practices that contribute to collective efforts to address the lack of leadership capacity in urban schools (Jacobson, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Nevarez & Wood, 2007; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). In analyzing leadership associated with urban schools, the merits of all forms of leadership, formal or informal, should be weighed. This study provides a platform for the exploration of leadership from the perspectives of urban elementary teachers and generates evidence through teacher leaders' stories of their work in urban schools.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the metamorphosis of five urban teachers into teacher leaders. Premised within the qualitative research paradigm, the goal of this research is to contribute to the on-going professional conversation by exploring the participating teachers' perceptions and gaining an understanding of their development as leaders as shaped by their experiences in the context of each teachers' unique urban school environment. Data from this study will be analyzed through a narrative analysis, analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995), and finally a cross-case analysis. Major theoretical constructs that influenced this study include role identity (Burke, 2003), distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002), teacher leadership, and urban teacher leadership. Emic (from the inside) perspectives of teacher maturation will provide insights into the roles of teacher leadership within the context of three urban elementary schools in the southeastern United States.

Exploring the personal journeys of the development of teacher leadership capacity is the core research focus of this study. The narratives of five urban elementary teachers' leadership development will provide insight into their self-perceptions and social experiences within their school contexts, which ultimately shape their professional role identities and leadership assertion choices. My central research question is: What are teacher leaders' stories of their development as teacher leaders? Sub-questions to be explored include: (a) How do urban teacher leaders' experiences influence their leadership growth? (b) How do urban teacher leaders think administrators influence their leadership development? (c) How do urban teacher leaders perceive their roles in urban schools? (d) How do urban teacher leaders contribute to the advancement of school goals?

Rationale and Significance of the Study

A transformation in teacher roles has occurred within the sphere of American education. From teaching in a one room school house as an independent individual who directly answered to local boards of education (Fuller, 1989) to their current status as individuals who have many personnel to whom they are accountable, teachers' influence and leadership has evolved. Recognized school leadership positions have been identified as formal roles for individuals who have attained additional educational qualifications and stepped outside the classroom to coordinate students' and teachers' activities as instructional leaders and organizational managers. Leadership has traditionally been viewed as a formal role enacted by one individual for the purpose of promoting and coordinating the process of schooling for all individuals in a learning community (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Goleman, Boyatkis, & McKee, 2002). In recognizing only formal

leadership roles, the field of education as a whole has ignored teachers as "major untapped resources" (Barth, 1988, p. 131). Teacher leaders maintain their regular responsibilities of classroom instruction and incorporate such practices as mentoring, peer coaching, committee work, and other school related activities into their professional roles. Teacher leaders wield much informal power (leadership) because of their influence, tacit knowledge, and proximity to school issues. Their ability to complement their prescribed duties of a classroom teacher with added duties raises the question: What about these individuals and their experiences led them to become teacher leaders?

In the traditional school model, principals, usually men, were the leaders of local schools, with assistant principals, instructional coaches, and classroom teachers following in the hierarchy of decision-making authority. Education has looked to administrators to make decisions that directly impact the actions of teachers and students, rather than calling on the expertise of the people who know the curriculum and students the best--the teachers. In this hierarchical structure of leadership, the principal (individual leader) has been responsible for directing teachers (the followers) to carry out organizational duties. However, a newly accepted leadership model, distributed leadership, is inclusive of all educators, regardless of formal leadership roles. Within the distributed leadership model, teacher leaders, along with others who hold expert knowledge, are recognized as vital to strengthening the school organization, operation and ultimately the learning process for students (Gronn, 2002; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Distributed leadership not only highlights the importance of leadership for all, but creates a conducive environment for those individuals with expert knowledge to actively participate to

maximize student learning, professional efficacy, and organizational effectiveness. Distributed leadership is an important theoretical base for this study.

In addition, theory related to role identity will be utilized to interpret teacher leaders' understandings in this research. The roles educators assert are not confined to the limitations of job descriptions (formal roles), but the roles are broadened by professional choices (informal roles) a teacher may assert. The theoretical framework of role identity will provide an additional lens for examining the narratives of participants' stories.

While several studies of teacher leadership have been done (e.g., Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Waller, 1932), recent case studies explore factors that compel teachers to assert their leadership skills (Day, 2002). This study is offered to lend credence to teacher leaders' voices in the field, while promoting the examination of teacher leadership through the theoretical lens of role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, and urban teacher leadership. By examining the stories of five teachers and recognizing that each journey is shaped by each teacher's unique development process and school context, their stories will foreground the often unheard voices of urban elementary teacher leaders. My study has generated a narrative that may illuminate critical variables that contribute to leadership assertion choices, reveal possible mechanisms for encouraging leadership within future urban teachers, and provide insight for building leadership roles in the school environment for administrators and school personnel who coordinate professional development activities.

Glossary of Relevant Terms

For the purpose of clarity, a glossary of relevant terms is provided in this section.

Role identity is described as the various patterns or frames of behavior associated with contexts and social interactions of individuals (Burke, 2003).

Distributed leadership is not a singular act, but a series of interactions that are initiated and influenced by more than one individual who holds expert knowledge at any level or position in a learning community (Gronn, 2002; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Teacher leaders are defined by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) as: "teachers who are leaders that lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved instructional practice" (p. 5).

Learning communities are groups of teachers and administrators within a school who collectively work together in attaining professional growth to promote and sustain student learning (Hord, 2008).

School leadership is the "reciprocal learning processes that enable participants to construct and negotiate meanings leading to a shared purpose of schooling" (Lambert, 1998, p. 10).

Professional development is sustained, purposeful training that schools and districts make available to educators to strengthen their professional skills (Guskey, 2000).

Narratives, as described by Ricoeur (1992), are linguistic expressions of human experience as related through life's actions.

Limitations

Two specific factors were counted as limitations of this study: (a) the researcher's potential bias and (b) teachers' abilities to recall events from their pasts.

The first limitation of this research project was my positive bias regarding teacher leaders. As a former teacher leader, I have a strong affinity for this segment of the teaching population. Therefore, I tried to bracket and suppress my own perceptions by focusing carefully on the participants' descriptions and comments. I monitored this potential bias by continuously questioning my observations and perceptions and by utilizing an external auditor (Creswell, 2005). After completing each interview and listening to each participant's account, I would make notes to myself regarding the quality of comments I posed during each interview. If comments revealed a bias, I would make notes of where this occurred in the interview process. Then, during the process of transcribing the audio file, I typed the questionable comment in red ink. After a transcription of the interview was completed, I printed out the transcription and made notes in the margin to flag the comments.

An external auditor is an outside reader (Creswell, 2005). For this study I gave the auditor a printout of the transcripts in all black ink. The auditor made comments and notes. I then compared and contrasted the two sets of reviewed transcripts. After identifying like commonalities, these flagged comments were then taken into account during future data collection and analysis. I made reminder notes to myself regarding biased comments in the subsequent interviews to ensure greater self-monitoring. This process continued for the duration of the interview process. Once all the interviews and

transcriptions were completed, a final review was conducted by me to minimize any potential bias.

A second limitation of this research project was teachers' abilities to accurately describe their professional development and the contexts of their workplaces. Although the richness of their careers was intriguing, the ability of teachers to accurately recall details over time was not perfect, as was indicated by their confusion of details, self-correction of events in their storytelling process, inconsistencies in career timelines, and comments prompted by frustration in their abilities to recall past experiences. To reduce the uncertainty of details and to increase the efficient use of time in the interview process, teacher leaders were given interview questions prior to each interview. Teachers were prompted by me to independently review career events through discussions with peers and family members and the review of artifacts, such as pictures, personal diaries, and school yearbooks to prepare for the research interviews. Teachers reported that the prior exposure to interview questions: (a) helped them to think in a leisurely, non-distracted manner; (b) gave them time to revisit events through discussions with family members and peers; and (c) allowed them to review artifacts which clarified vague memories. This activation strategy proved to be beneficial as teachers conversed about earlier life and career events and offered greater detail when retelling their stories.

Organization of Dissertation

Subsequent to this introductory chapter, my study is organized into four additional chapters. In Chapter 2, a review of literature concentrates upon discussions of urban educational contexts, the theoretical framework of role identity, the leadership model of distributed leadership, the phenomena of teacher leadership and more specifically, the

focus of this study, urban teacher leadership. In Chapter 3, an explanation of the methodologies of narrative analysis and analysis of narrative and the data collection and data analyses processes are presented. Within Chapter 4, individual narratives of participants and analyses of each case are shared and discussed. Finally, in Chapter 5, a cross-case analysis to identify commonalities and anomalies across-cases is presented to summarize findings, illuminate conclusions, and generate recommendations. I close by offering reflections on this research process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

> The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action (Dewey, 1916, p. 408).

This dissertation is a study of teacher leadership development in urban elementary schools. This chapter is a review of literature related to the urban contexts, theoretical orientations, and relevant research findings that frame this study. After reviewing literature on context, theory and research, I will conclude the chapter with a summary of essential points.

Urban Context

Since my participants are *urban* teachers, different external variables influence their pedagogical and professional decision making. I will discuss some of the complexities the urban learning environment presents to teachers. Describing the historical evolution of the American urban setting and providing a description of who students and teachers are and the challenges that impact the urban learning process will make the complexities of teaching in urban America more apparent. The following background information related to the urban context provides a frame of reference for the remainder of this work.

Background

Inner city, center city, central city, ghetto, hood, and barrio are all terms that have been used to describe urban America. Many of the terms like inner, center and central allude to the directional orientation of mid-points in cities. Ghetto is derived from the word, *bourghetto*, and was used by Italians to describe city zones that belonged to Jewish residents (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2008). *Hood* came from a shortened version of the

word *neighborhood*, and *barrio* originates from Spanish immigrants when they described living quarters (Merriam-Webster, 2008). Statistically, *urban* is distinguished by the Bureau of Census as a location populated by 2,500 or more people. Other categories that the Bureau of Census qualifies within this broad term are a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MAS) as a city with 50,000 or more and a total metropolitan area of 100,000 inhabitants (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000).

> Clark (1965) comments upon the term "urban" from a sociopolitical perspective: America has contributed to the concept of the ghetto that has restricted persons to a special area and to the limiting of their freedom of choice based on their skin color. The dark ghetto's invisible walls have been erected by the white society, by those who have power. (p. 11)

Based upon Clark's description, the urban context is often designated as a space for those who are powerless. The powerless in urban neighborhoods often experience high poverty rates, high unemployment rates, increased crime, low education attainment, reduced city services, and limited access to opportunities outside their neighborhoods (Doherty, 1998).

If, as Bourdrieu and Passeron (1977) argue, schools are social constructions that transmit the values of the communities they serve, then urban educators experience more intense challenges than teachers from other teaching environments. To understand the setting of urban schools and their neighborhoods, I will revisit the formation of the urban context and the societal influences that sustain Clark's "invisible walls."

Evolution

In the breadth of American history, the urban context has shifted in its function and purpose. Initially, as settlement of the Americas increased, the choice of location for citizens was that of a common community that offered hope for economic upward mobility, safety in defensible numbers, and a pool of producers and consumers who formed a supply of collective resources and promoted economic growth (Warner, 1995). During the 19th century, urban areas served as healthy economic hubs where employment was plentiful in service and industrial positions. Filling the available work opportunities were large influxes of immigrants who contributed to population growth (Takaki, 1995). Industrialization in post-Civil War America drove the economy and created new urban economic, political and social problems such as corrupt city governments, child labor, inadequate city services, hazardous housing issues, and marginalized educational opportunities (Urban & Wagoner, 2000).

It was not until after the Great Depression of the 1920's that inner cities began to deteriorate and, according to Anyon (1997), began a "downward spiral from which they have never recovered" (p.56). As the concept of suburbs rose in the 1950's and 1960's, ghettos expanded, industrialization dwindled, and property taxes that financed education declined. Mass-production decreased as more overseas trade policies allowed lower labor costs with fewer environmental restrictions to be implemented. Technological innovations replaced human power. Unions became less effective in negotiating labor conditions to retain low-skilled jobs, and those jobs were ultimately exported to other countries (Theobald, 2005).

By mid 20th century, civil rights were being asserted via such legislation as Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education (1954) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In Brown, the premise of *separate but equal*, (the rationalization of the dual educational system for White and Black students), was found to be inadequate and unconstitutional. School integration was mandated and to ensure that students from various populations were intermixed, transportation of students in the form of busing was sanctioned as a means to meet the mandates of the Supreme Court ruling. However, many parents chose not to bus their students across attendance zones. Rather, moving to a suburban school or enrolling in a private school became options of choice for many of those who had the economic means. An aftershock of school integration of the 1960's, moving to the suburbs from urban areas came to be known as White Flight (Fruchter, 2007). Brown (2003) contends that this trend has continued to the present day.

Today, the inner cities of the early 21st century are characterized by declining employment rates (Theobald, 2005), increases in poverty (Sledge & Morehead, 2006) and stratification of ethnic and socio-economic groups (Nevarez & Wood, 2007). Wilson (1996) notes that, "The disappearance of work has adversely affected not only individuals, families and neighborhoods, but the social life of the city at large" (p. xiii). Consequently, urban schools serve communities that have high unemployment rates, declining populations, shrinking property taxes, minimal infrastructure support and increased crime rates (Doherty, 1998; Haymes, 1995).

Urban Schools

Students

Urban students make up about 13 % of the United States school age population (Truscott & Truscott, 2005). Of all the urban school-age students, the majority are of African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American and Asian American descent (Dittman, 2004; Orfield & Lee, 2004; Talbert-Johnson, 2006). Lippman (1996) and Porter and Soper (2003) found that often urban public schools are primarily composed of one ethnic/racial group and that there is a higher concentration of poverty among students than in suburban and rural schools. The National Center for Children in Poverty (2005) contends that 51% of children in urban areas live in low–income homes. Furthermore, 95% of all children of immigrants and 91% of students who are English language learners attend urban schools (Fix & Capps, 2005).

Teachers

Teachers in the urban context are predominantly young, White, middle class females who have limited experiences in urban schools and often live outside the attendance zones in which they teach (Haberman, 2005; Haberman & Rikards, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teacher turnover is frequent (Crosby, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001), and longevity in the field averages three to five years of service (Haberman, 2005). Teachers who are initially assigned to urban schools may remain in hopes of "paying their dues" to qualify for transfers to suburban schools (Becker, 1952). Social and political stresses compound the requirements of teaching, and cultural unfamiliarity contributes to tensions that impair communication in establishing and sustaining relationships with parents, co-workers, and students (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll,

Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling- Hammond, & Duffy, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 1999).

Teachers who are able to meet the challenges of the urban context are sometimes placed in leadership positions for which they are not ready (Leithwood, 1992; Little, 1988). Such early ascension to leadership roles may create additional tensions. These tensions may impair professional relationships (Wasley, 1991) and compromise teachers' potentials as long-term school leaders due to the pressure to perform that may ultimately lead to reversals in their professional growth (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Teacher leaders who negotiate the urban context effectively contribute to the school environment through a variety of informal and formal roles that are specific to their own teaching context and are focused on meeting the needs of the students they serve (Nieto, 2007).

Challenges

Contemporary urban education faces many challenges. National data reveal that the integrity of urban schools has deteriorated internally and externally (Crosby 1999; Freedman, Brookhart, & Loadman, 1999). Externally, buildings are in disrepair and often lack basic structural integrity, as evidenced by asbestos, lead paint, broken windows and leaking roofs (Kozol, 2005). Internally, the erosion of academic integrity is demonstrated by low graduation rates, high dropout rates, lower student achievement, discipline problems and limited advanced educational opportunities (Kozol, 1991, 2005; Louis & Miles, 1990; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). Furthermore, larger societal issues such as poverty, limited health care, child abuse, crime, and family fragmentation (Anyon, 1997; Noguera, 2003; Talbert-Johnson, 2004) have a greater impact on urban

students in comparison to their peers in suburban settings (Dryfoos, 2002; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

Two significant professional challenges that urban schools face are (a) the quality and retention of teachers (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994 ; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Weiner, 1999) and (b) school leadership capacity (Jacobson, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Nevarez & Wood, 2007; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Each of these challenges is dependent upon the quality of preparation and the readiness and willingness of individuals to assert their roles as teachers and leaders. Unlike the challenges that are situated in the community context, quality and retention of teachers and leadership capacity are considered school issues that can be addressed by professional development. Efforts to address these challenges have been initiated through mentoring (Blank & Kershaw, 2009), sustained professional development (Desimone, Smith, & Ueno, 2006; Guskey, 1994) and the implementation of professional learning communities (Hord, 2008).

Teacher quality and retention rates are personnel issues that directly impact instructional effectiveness and student performance (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). According to the National Commission of Teaching and America's Future (2003), large urban schools with high percentages of poor and minority students have the highest teacher turnover rates, the highest percentages of first-year teachers, and the highest percentage of teachers with less than five years teaching experience. Research has identified teachers with less than three years experience as less effective than veteran

teachers, thereby impairing student achievement (Kain & Singleton, 1996; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Schools that experience these factors have difficulty sustaining the capacity to accomplish school improvements due to teachers leaving before reforms can become fully instituted. Thus, the inability to retain teachers compromises opportunities for strengthening instructional practices and learning cultures (The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2005) and developing instructional leaders who remain in the urban classroom.

School leadership capacity is a significant challenge that urban schools face (Jacobson, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Nevarez & Wood, 2007; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Urban schools have often been used as training grounds for inexperienced principals who are eager to enter administration (Cuban, 2001). The same ideology of "sink or swim" (Lortie, 1975), that is considered the mantra of new teachers, also applies to new administrators. Urban schools often are not the professional destinations of most new administrators, but serve as arenas in which to experience rites of passage for future advancement in their careers (Papa, 2007).

Another factor that inhibits new teachers and urban school leaders' development is the lack of cultural cohesion. As previously stated, a majority of urban schools are comprised of single-race student populations (Tillman, 2005), while 65% of the principals in predominantly minority schools are White (The National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998; Orfield, 2009). Racial and cultural dissonance between student and administrative populations is magnified when administrators and teachers are not "considerate of the ways in which a racially and ethnically diverse educational

environment affects leadership practice" (Tillman, 2005, p. 4), which has a direct influence on student performance (Cotton, 2003; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Sanders (1999) comments:

> urban principals, regardless of race and ethnicity, must have a comprehensive understanding of the culture that exists within the urban community. This understanding of culture suggests that urban principals will not allow fear or stereotypes to guide their interactions with urban students and families. (p. 117)

Aside from this study forging further understanding of the development of urban teacher leadership, it is also my hope to reinforce the significance of context in the learning process and to encourage teachers' professional efficacy as urban school leaders. As Smylie (1995) states, to understand teacher leadership, we must also understand the contexts in which they operate; and to develop teacher leadership to its fullest potential, we must also develop the work context of teacher leaders. The conclusion drawn from Smylie's statement regarding urban teacher leaders and the urban context suggests that the levity of urban teacher leaders is greater than teachers from other learning contexts, thus making their leadership development and contributions to the urban setting a more complex and tenuous process.

Role Identity Theory

Teacher leadership has been acknowledged as a formal position and an informal role. In the formal sense, teacher leaders are selected to serve in recognized functional capacities outside the classroom as curriculum generalists, department chairs, or mentors (Danielson, 2007; Harris, 2003). Although formal positions of teacher leadership

automatically command a certain level of influence in their own right, it is the earned role of influence among peers (i.e., informal teacher leadership) and the elements that lead to their assertions that are the foci of this study. This research will explore the evolution of formal and informal leadership roles of participants and the complexities of these roles in teachers' lives.

Gee (2000) claims that "researchers in a variety of areas have come to see identity as an important analytic tool for understanding schools and society" (p. 99). A broad spectrum of research has been generated in an attempt to understand the mechanisms of role identity (Gee, 2000; Leary & Tangney, 2003). An explanation of role identity theory from the field of social psychology provides a theoretical foundation from which to examine teachers' choices related to how and why they incorporate leadership roles into their professional practice. Through their own stories, participants shared their journeys and revealed their own meaning-making processes of identity construction as related to their professional leadership roles. Scholars such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach, and Zilber (1998), and Riessman (2002) affirm that personal stories or narratives are the best avenues for revealing inner selves. Thus, according to Lieblich and colleagues, through identity stories, "We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell" (p. 7).

Unlike social identity theory, which concentrates upon group processes and interactions, role identity is a theory that focuses upon the individual development of self (Stryker, 1968). Inclusive to this process is the acquisition of self-knowledge and understanding the development of roles. Since the 1960's, research on the concept of self

has steadily gained prominence based upon the breadth of literature produced in the field as noted by House (1977); Biddle (1986); Ashmore and Jussim (1997); and Owens (2003).

Two primary traditions of social psychology, symbolic interactionism (Stryker, 1968) and structuralism (Turner, 1995), suggest distinct meanings and functions related to the construct of *role*. A third perspective, "role as resource" (Baker & Faulkner (1991), is also included to provide another perspective of research from the field. Conceptions of role warrant discussion as they provide a more complex view of role identity.

From the symbolic interactionist viewpoint, Stryker and Vyran (2003) explain role as "expectations attached to social categories" (p. 7). The function of roles has also been widely viewed as a model for behavior (Alexander & Wiley, 1981; Callero, 1994; Park, 1937; Schwalbe, 1987) or a way of thinking (Mead, 1934; Schwalbe, 1987). Hewitt (2007) believes that a role provides a "script for any given situation" (p. 62). Stryker (1980) argues that rather than *scripts*, roles are frames of conduct that people choose to enact for varying social situations. Strykers' perspective on frames of conduct seems to explain teachers' ability to shift between classroom and leadership roles and balance the varying demands and responsibilities they encounter during the course of the school day.

A second framework, structural role theory, proposes that role is distinctly shaped by macrosocial structures or processes (e.g., social class, modernization). In this view, a person's definition of role is determined by macrosocial structures rather than constructed from interactions with other people (Turner, 1995). The development of structural role

theory has yet to be fully developed. The lack of researchers operating from this perspective has impaired the quantity of research generated to explore its theoretical assertions (Biddle, 1986).

Finally, Baker and Faulkner (1991) link the previous theories into a third theoretical concept: "role as resource" (p. 280). Baker and Faulkner theorize that individuals create roles as abstract self-conceptions through which they internalize certain positions within specific social structures, in particular social networks, for the purpose of goal attainment. Callero (1994) concurs by stating that roles are only real if they are "recognized, accepted and used to accomplish pragmatic interactional goals in a community" (p. 232).

All three contributions to role identity theory suggest that the negotiated understanding of an individual's perceptions are influenced by context -- whether it be another individual, a societal process or structure, or particular social networks. Social expectations within situational contexts dictate roles despite the source of influence or the need to create the role. Therefore, the premise drawn from these social psychology traditions indicate that context is a highly influential factor in role identity development. The following discussion of key constructs is drawn from the literature on role identity, and it is presented to help in understanding this theoretical perspective.

Key Constructs

The following key constructs will offer insight as they relate to theories of identity formation. Issues such as negotiation, prioritization, and conflict resolution are

discussed to more clearly illuminate current theory in the field of identity development. These constructs will serve as a basis of understanding for readers.

Self and identity. James (1950) postulated *self* to be "the sum total of all that an individual can call his" (p. 291). Another prominent early theorist, Mead (1934), believed that the concept of self was the capacity of humans to self-select behaviors as based upon social contexts. The ability to objectify ourselves (i.e., name ourselves, talk to ourselves, imagine ourselves in various contexts) allows us to communicate to others who we are based upon our experiences (Hewitt, 2007). Rosenberg (1965), in *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*, describes self as "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as object" (p. 7). Stets and Burke (2000) extend Rosenberg's classic definition by suggesting the self as having the ability to view itself as an object that can classify, identify, and label itself in ways that are linked to other social classifications. When the self recognizes this labeling process according to discrete social situations, McCall and Simmons (1978) recognize this self imposed distinction as identification and, as a result, the internal process of identification forms identity.

Identity has been generalized into three categories: social identity, personal identity and role identity (Burke, 2003). Social identity, as previously noted, refers to a group association (Tajfel, 1982). For example, people may associate themselves with specific group memberships such as African-American, Baptist, Republican, or cancer survivor. Personal identity refers to how a person is viewed based upon personal characteristics (e.g., eccentric, noble, impartial, and fair) that may or may not be shared by others. Role identity, the category this study explores, is described as the various

patterns or frames of behavior associated with contexts and social interactions of individuals. Role identities asserted by individuals may include mother, teacher, president, or wife (Burke, 2003).

Identity, as Thoits (1986) suggests, is internally stored information and meanings by individuals that serve as frameworks for understanding self and interpreting life experiences as influenced by their contexts. Burke (2004) contends that identity is "the sets of meaning people hold for themselves that define 'what it means' to be who they are as persons, as role occupants, and as group members" (p. 5). Simply put, identity is the recognition of self as situated in social contexts that answers the question, "Who am I?"

Role identity. Central to the concept of identity is an individuals' ability to perceive himself or herself as a role occupant who assumes a role identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). McCall and Simmons (1978) define a role identity as "the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position" (p. 65). Stryker (1968) explains role identity as the chosen behaviors of people as related to the variety of interactions and social contexts in their lives. The analogy of *wearing different hats* refers to the multiplicity of roles people enact in their lives to negotiate between contexts (i.e., work, home, and social settings) and interactions (i.e., supervisor, mother, or friend). Owens (2003) suggests that role identities give meaning to individuals' daily routines through their constructed interpretations of life in their social contexts. Personal choices of revealing or subduing traits, characteristics, behaviors, values and beliefs are dependent upon their judgments of the demands of the social

situation. Therefore, context directly impacts a chosen role identity individuals negotiate in social interactions.

Identity salience and role conflict. To manage the multiplicity of roles individuals enact, Stryker (1980) believes that a hierarchy of salience exists amongst the variety of role identities an individual may develop and utilize. Prioritizing the roles and enacting the behaviors associated with the roles depends upon the frequency a role may be used. As a way of organizing oneself, Stryker (1980) contends that multiple roles may be evoked simultaneously to satisfy situational overlaps. If conflict occurs due to the multiplicity of roles an individual may find appropriate to employ, the salience of roles will become critical predictors of chosen behaviors along with the level of commitment an individual may hold to competing roles (Burke, 2006).

Self-selecting the importance of roles is founded upon the level of commitment one has to that individual identity and the contexts in which the identity is utilized (Stets, 2003). Stryker and Serpe (1982) describe commitment as "the degree to which the person's relationships to specified sets of others depends on his or her being a particular kind of person, i.e., occupying a particular position in an organized structure of relationships and playing a particular role" (p. 207). Therefore, the importance individuals attach to their identities determines the amount of effort and how well they enact a role (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Stryker, 1968); and this is recognized as their measure of commitment.

If an individual's commitment to a role identity is compromised and incongruence is formed due to dissonance between social norms and individual role identity standards

(a personal reference for defining what a role is), then the level of an individual's security in that role decreases. As a consequence of role identity incongruence, cognitive dissonance (Biddle, 1986) or role conflict (Burke, 2006) will result and an impetus for change may be prompted (Burke, 2006; Serpe, 1987). Often associated with role conflict, cognitive dissonance is an individual, internal imbalance of standards within a single person (Burke, 2006). For the purpose of this study, role conflict will be used as a general term to delineate internal and external dissonance within role standards. Kashima, Foddy, and Patow (2002) suggest two possible courses of action to gain congruence: (a) the realignment of individual role standards; and/or (b) individual incorporation of new roles within social contexts. When courses of action are resolved through either or both of these means, Swann (1983) names this act of gaining congruence as self-verification. Understanding teachers' self-verification processes related to how and why they resolve their role incongruence is an essential element of this study.

Role-taking and role-making. The terms role-taking and role-making are necessary to understanding the processes connected to the creation and adaptation of roles. Role-taking, as defined by Mead (1934), Stryker (1962), and Schwalbe (1988), is the understanding of individuals as they imagine and empathize with other people's thoughts, emotions, and actions. Accurate role-taking according to Stryker (1957) is "the correct prediction of the responses of others" (p. 287). Role-taking is the ability of individuals to consider more perspectives than their own when making choices in their interactions with others. Role-taking or conceptualizing others' roles must occur prior to

the enaction of a role (role-making). Role-making is the enactment of the understanding a person has of the perspectives, thoughts, emotions and motives in a situation; whereas role-taking is the abstract comprehension of a person's perspective in a role (Hewitt, 2007).

The theory of role identity provides a foundation for discussions of distributed leadership and teacher leadership. Gaining a sense of identity formation is important to understanding how individuals create an awareness of who they are and how their identity formation may carry over into leadership development. Shifting from an individual to an organizational perspective, we now turn to examining distributed leadership.

Distributed Leadership: A Leadership Model

Leadership

As early as 1974, Stogdill contended that leadership has almost as many definitions as the concept of *democracy.* Burns (1978) commented, "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2). Foster (1986) describes leadership as "the process of transforming and empowering" (p. 188). Northouse's (2004) definition of leadership concludes: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). Northouse (2004) qualifies the phenomenon of leadership as: (a) a process; (b) an exerting influence; (c) an occurrence within a group setting; and (d) an action driven by goal effort. Accordingly, leadership is not defined by position or status, rather by action and context. Northouse's perspective of leadership, as directed from one individual in a

position of power (leader) to a group of subordinates (followers), has been the standard model of leadership in public education.

In describing leadership in education, the term *management* cannot be overlooked. Bennis and Nanus (1985) and Kotter (1990) distinguish between the two functions. Kotter emphasizes that management promotes order and control (maintaining the status quo), whereas leadership seeks to move individuals within an organization in new directions to promote growth. Bennis and Nanus maintain that management's goal is to complete tasks and to oversee routines, while the function of leadership is to motivate and inspire others to enact visions that will bring about change. However, Yukl (1989) contends that the two are closely intertwined in the process of influence, whether leaders inspire individuals or manipulate organizational, personnel or logistical decisions. The terms *leadership* and *management* are often used interchangeably in education and for the purpose of this study, the tradition will be followed.

Educational Leadership

School leadership has traditionally been associated with an administrator (often a principal) appointed to a *position* whose *status* carries with it authority to operationalize school policies and procedures (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Goleman, Boyatkis, & McKee, 2002). Rost (1991) refers to this form of leadership as "the industrial leadership paradigm" (p. 10). This leadership theory, also known as the *great man* (Pearce & Conger, 2003) or *heroic* leader theory (Timperley, 2005), is characterized by an individual who solely directs the organization. Begun in the early 20th century, in an effort to make the schooling of large numbers of urban students efficient and effective,

this model continues as the standard form of leadership in education today. Reich (1983) comments upon this industrial leadership paradigm: "Specialization and simplification forced the development of management hierarchies, arranged like a pyramid. Each level up the hierarchy is responsible for a progressively larger part of the operations" (p. 64-65).

The limitations of the industrial leadership paradigm have generated a great deal of criticism. School leaders who operate under the industrial leadership paradigm are disadvantaged by: (a) short professional tenures of three to five years per school site (Danielson, 2007); (b) singular vision (Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007); (c) onus of authority (Behar-Horenstein & Amatea, 1996); and (d) inability to complete growing job- related tasks (Johnson, 2005; Lashway, 2003). Scholarly criticism of educational leadership has challenged practitioners and theoreticians to reexamine the roles of school leaders and how these roles are operationalized for K-12 students (Hart, 1995; Smylie & Hart, 1999). One way of addressing the limitations of the industrial leadership paradigm is through the application of a model of leadership known as distributed leadership (Gronn, 2003; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership represents the possibility of a significant shift in the practice of leadership in today's public schools. Unlike the industrial leadership paradigm, this leadership model suggests that leading is not a singular act, but a series of interactions that are initiated and influenced by more than one individual who holds expert knowledge at any level or position in a learning community (Gronn, 2003;

Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Spillane, Diamond, Halverson,Walker, and Jita (2001) argue that "school leadership is best understood as a distributed practice, stretched over the school's social and situational contexts" (p. 23). Fullan contends that effective school leadership is a collective enterprise (2003). Silins and Mulford (2002) describe this paradigm shift as moving from "power over people to empowering people within organizations" (p. 562). Foster (1986), a prominent educational leadership scholar of the 20th century, forecast that a new ideology (distributed leadership) is a necessary alternative to the traditional leadership paradigm (great man, hierarchical perspective) that schools have operated under for over a hundred years. In his seminal work, *Paradigms and Promises: New Approaches to Educational Administration*, Foster encourages the field to "build a case for the viability of alternative perspectives on the administration of education" (p. 19). Furthermore, he states, "if we are serious about our leadership roles and the values of our democratic society, some of these participatory modes should at least be given a chance" (p. 199).

Evolution. MacBeath (2007) reminds us that distributed leadership is an ancient concept exemplified by God's mandate to Moses to delegate leadership over the Israelites as they pursued their quest for a homeland. In contemporary society, Gibbs (1954), a social psychologist, is credited for first describing leadership from a collective stance:

> Leadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group. This concept of *distributed leadership* is an important one. If there are leadership functions which must be performed in any group, and if these functions may be

> "focused" or "distributed," then the leaders will be identifiable both in terms of the frequency and in terms of the multiplicity or pattern of functions performed. (p. 884)

Distributed leadership remained dormant theory until the late 1980's. The conceptual models of the day centered upon what Rowan (1990) labeled "network patterns of authority" (p.7), in which leadership activities were dispersed broadly across a variety of roles and role incumbents (Heller & Firestone, 1995; Hord & Huling-Austin, 1986; Smylie & Denny, 1990). Scholars concur that the empirical work based on distributed theory has been limited (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003; Harris, 2004; National College of School Leadership, 2006; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007; Timperley, 2005). Unlike other theories, which have first been validated by research and then implemented through policy endorsements, distributed leadership has experienced an inverted approach of policy infusion then growth in empirical foundations (Hartley, 2007).

In 1996, two national associations, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board in Educational Administration (NPBEA) worked collectively to create national leadership standards known as *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders* (1996). These standards provided a catalyst for advancing distributed leadership. In 2000, the CCSSO statement of priorities included a commitment to ensuring that educational stakeholders have "leaders working effectively in 'multiple leadership' or 'distributed leadership' teams" (Council of Chief State School Officers, p. 5). In the revised ISLLC standards,

Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008, the third standard requires school leadership to "develop the capacity for distributed leadership" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 14,). In addition, the term *school administrator* in the original standards has been replaced with the term *education leader* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2000, pp. 14 -15). This change in terminology reflects the concept of leadership shifting from being the responsibility of a single person in a formal role to a broader understanding of the process of leadership as a concerted practice for educational stakeholders, regardless of role status. Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett (2005) and Storey (2004) argue that the current escalation of research has propelled distributed leadership to the forefront of leadership theory development.

Literature. Across the literature, distributed leadership has been labeled as participative (Vroom & Jago, 1998), collaborative (Wallace, 1988), shared (Pearce & Conger, 2003), democratic (Gastil, 1997; Spillane, 2005), and delegated (Watson & Scribner, 2007). These terms demonstrate the breadth of significant conversation generated in discussing distributed leadership (Bennett, Wise, Wood, & Harvey, 2003). The early works of Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (1999) and Gronn (2002) are consistently referenced throughout the literature, and these authors are considered to be the authorities on this subject (Hartley, 2007). According to Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, and Yashkina (2007), the majority of information generated about distributed leadership is a result of research on teacher leadership. Therefore, I will incorporate examples of distributed leadership research to discuss teacher leadership in greater detail.

Distributed leadership is defined by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (1999) as "the activities engaged in by leaders, in interaction with others in particular contexts around specific tasks" (p. 6). Distributive leadership as posed by Spillane and Diamond (2007) is not a top-down model of leadership, but the identification of talents and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of position, to act as experts or leaders to implement and empower the organization collectively to meet common visions and goals. Therefore, there is no single right way to deliver leadership. Rather, it is important for organization members to find methods that make leadership work as based upon the expert knowledge and abilities of various individuals, school policies and legislative mandates, and community culture and context (Gronn, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Spillane (2006) categorizes distributed leadership into two main categories: additive and person plus. Additive leadership is distinguished by behaviors of some, many or all members from across an organization. Person-plus is described as an additional person, outside the formal role, who compliments the leadership activities of the individual(s) who hold formal leadership roles within an organization. Either distributed leadership form is characterized by collaborative (concertive) or independent efforts that are inclusive of planned or coincidental actions that promote the vision of the group.

Gronn (2002) interprets distributed leadership as numerical action or concertive. Numerical action is the ability of all members of an organization to participate at any given time in the leadership process. This characterization of leadership is the most

common form described in the literature. Gronn (2003) posits that followers and leaders work in accord toward a common goal regardless of their professional roles. The concertive action of distributed leadership, as hypothesized by Gronn, employs three distinct associative forms: (a) spontaneous collaboration; (b) intuitive working relations; and (c) institutionalized practices. Gronn's three forms of distributed leadership are used to frame this study's findings.

Spontaneous collaboration occurs when pairs or trios of individuals connect to resolve a common issue or concern. This convergence may be short term, or if the outcome is satisfactory, then the collaboration may continue in the form of a work team. This cohesion of effort may be initiated by groups or an individual's perceived need to create a change in the work environment.

Intuitive working relations are the abilities of individuals to establish a working relationship with others who have skill sets that are necessary to accomplish tasks. Time is critical to this category due to the need of participants to collaborate based upon an established relationship and working knowledge of peer characteristics and abilities. Knowing peer strengths and weaknesses is essential for partners to work together effectively to take on different roles to accomplish designated tasks.

Institutionalized practices are defined by pre-set protocols, procedures within organizational groups that are formed to carry out duties and tasks related to specific needs. Advisory committees and leadership councils are two examples. These structures offer a formal networking connection, but it is the interactions of the personnel that make the outcomes of the tasks significant. The description of these distributive leadership

forms provides a frame for analyzing participants' interactions as findings and implications of the study are shared. I will next discuss the phenomenon of teacher leadership and present research from this field.

Teacher Leadership

History

Teacher leadership has a long history in education (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Lambert, 2003; Ovando, 1996). Weise and Murphy (1995) remind us that since the progressive era of education in the early 1900's, teacher leadership has been viewed as a reform effort to reorganize schools as democratic communities. It has been referred by Murphy (2005) as a "complex phenomenon" (p. ix). The assertion of teacher leadership has been attributed to teachers stepping outside their traditional roles within and beyond the classroom to contribute toward school improvement (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Waller, 1932).

Since the reform era that began in the 1980s, educational leadership and teacher leadership have experienced theoretical shifts (Murphy, 2007; Urban & Wagoner, 2000). Several major occurrences in the field of educational leadership took place around 1990, providing a natural demarcation for examining the shift in leadership paradigms from an industrial model to one that reflects the inclusion of teacher leadership. These major occurrences were: (a) the Holmes Group (1986) summarized new teacher preparation practices that promoted teachers as leaders; (b) Foster (1986) published seminal leadership work that called for the field of leadership to consider participatory leadership models; (c) Rost (1991) concluded from his extensive review of the educational leadership literature from the 20th century that leadership was moving away from the

industrial paradigm into a broader, more participatory model; (d) Senge (1990) published *The Fifth Discipline*, which promoted team learning and shared vision; (e) the National Commission for Excellence in Educational Administration (1988) encouraged the field to reexamine its scope of preparation and practices so its leaders could successfully engage stakeholders; and (f) late 1980s reform efforts called for organizational change in schools from the bottom up, which encouraged teacher empowerment, site-based management, and parental involvement (Webb, 2006).

Silva, Gilbert, and Nolan (2000) state that over the last 30 years teacher leadership has evolved through three phases. In the first stage of teacher leadership, formal roles such as department head, union representative and master teacher were formed and institutionalized as lower level management positions beneath the school administrator. As with other tiers of management in education, this level attempted to streamline the efficiency and effectiveness of schooling (Evans, 1996). The second phase of teacher leadership development centered upon the teacher as the instructional expert. Moving beyond the classroom, teachers' instructional craft knowledge was shared and their realms of influence expanded into formalized roles such as team leader, staff development facilitator and curriculum developer. Yet, Silva and colleagues pose that it was not until the third, and current, phase that every day practices of teachers became formally valued for the climate of collegiality and professionalism they foster. Johnson (1990) labels this shift in role from "lone operatives to active partners" (p. 213). As active partners, teacher leaders are viewed as teachers who step outside the confines of their classrooms to act as mentors, collaborators, and problem solvers who provide

consultation in context and share meaningful learning opportunities with their peers. Teacher leadership from this perspective is not viewed as a hierarchical, vertical phenomenon, but as a lateral network of thoughtful, organic and focused interactions within the school organization (Gronn, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

More recently, according to Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002), three new approaches to teacher leadership have been identified. Teacher research, self-managed teams, and distributive leadership are viewed as possible school reform strategies and practices. Shifting away from the role-based model of individual empowerment that has been heavily relied upon in the traditional leadership model, each of these approaches is viewed from an over-arching organizational perspective that values collective individual strengths. The purpose of teacher research is to investigate problems related to teaching in an effort to expand teachers' knowledge and to provide an impetus for organizational improvement. Such methods used are action research, teacher inquiry, and practitioner inquiry

The second development in teacher leadership, self-managed teams, is constructed by groups of individuals who have been assigned specific tasks or issues of inquiry to address collectively. When operating autonomously, teams form their own operational procedures and goals in addressing school or personnel needs. Teams have been influential in relation to peer beliefs, behaviors, and thinking (Yukl, 1998). The relational aspect among group members can create cohesion that works to solidify

commitment to group goals and activities leading to enhanced outcomes (Crow & Pounder, 2000).

The last form of teacher leadership that Smylie, Marks, and Conley suggest is distributive leadership, and it is also viewed from three different perspectives. First, Firestone (1995) and Heller and Firestone (1996) describe central tasks or functions rather than formalized roles as a distributive leadership model. Ogawa, Pounder and colleagues (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995) refute the notion of specific tasks and roles, noting the interactions among all organizational members as a distributive leadership practice. The last form of this model, as proposed by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (1999) and described in the previous section in greater detail, views distributive leadership from a social lens in which leadership is "stretched over" (p. 6) the interactions of individuals and organizational practices to meet context needs.

Conceptions of Teacher Leaders

York-Barr and Duke (2004) and Murphy (2005) conclude from their comprehensive review of the literature that there are few worthy definitions of teacher leadership. Rather, researchers have conceptualized the traits, roles and behaviors of teacher leaders without clearly defining the phenomenon of teacher leadership -- thus, making *teacher leadership* an umbrella phrase. However, to gain insight into the varied explanations from the field, a few noted teacher leadership scholars' interpretations are acknowledged. Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) offer their conceptualization of teacher leadership as: "Action that transforms teaching and learning in a school, that ties school and community together on behalf of learning, and that

advances social sustainability and quality of life for a community. Teacher leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole-school success" (p. xvii). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) refer to teacher leadership as a "sleeping giant" (p. 2), an underutilized school resource, of which teacher leaders "lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved instructional practice" (p. 5). Lambert (2003) asserts: "Those who have managed to keep their sense of purpose alive and well are reflective, inquisitive, focused on improving their craft, action oriented; they accept responsibility for student learning and have a strong sense of self" (p. 422).

Murphy (2005) describes teacher leadership as having "an instructional, relational and an enabling component. Teacher leaders are chiefly concerned with securing enhanced learning outcomes, generating positive relationships with staff and students and creating the enabling conditions for others to learn" (p. 15). Leithwood, Jantzi, Ryan, and Steinbach (1997) characterize a teacher leader as follows:

> The composite teacher leader is warm, dependable, and self-effacing with a genuine commitment to the work of colleagues and the school. She has well-honed interpersonal skills which are exercised with individuals and groups of colleagues, as well as with students. In addition, the teacher leader possesses the technical skills required for program improvement and uses them in concert with a broad knowledge base about education policy, subject matter, and local community and the school's students. (pp. 23 – 24)

The conclusion that Harris and Muijs (2005) draw is one that reads far beyond seeing teacher leadership as a role or a function; it conceptualizes leadership as dynamic interrelations that create catalysts for change. Teachers are change catalysts that exert either positive or negative influences in the learning community. Fullan (1993) believes that teacher leaders move beyond exerting influence to taking action to promote change.

Wenger (1998) posits that if schools are to truly be communities of practice, then all forms of collaboration, including teacher leadership, must be valued. The vital nature of teacher leadership is becoming acknowledged within schools and, as a result, the importance of teacher involvement and influence is gaining recognition (Lambert, 2003; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Wasley, 1991). Teacher leadership positively influences school effectiveness (Frost & Durrant, 2003), school improvement (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005; Boone, Hartzman, & Mero, 2006), teacher retention and morale (Darling-Hammond, 1995) and social interactions (Harris, 2003). Leadership, no longer reserved for school administrators, now includes school stakeholders who are challenged to become more involved in educational decisions (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1997). Barth (1988) asserts:

> Teachers harbor extraordinary leadership capabilities, and their leadership potential is a major untapped resource for improving our nation's schools. The world will come to accept that all teachers can lead, as many as now accept that all children can learn ……, if we can overcome the many impediments facing teachers and principals that block teachers' leading

> and if we can find conditions under which teachers will exercise that leadership. (p. 131)

In the next two sections, research on teacher leadership and urban teacher leadership will be reviewed.

Teacher Leadership Research

Introduction

A review of research is included to ground this study in the knowledge base of teacher leadership. Prior to examining the research, two significant characteristics of the literature should be noted. First, as reported by Smylie (1995) and York-Barr and Duke (2004), the field's empirical work is limited and incomplete. Yet, an increase in research has been observed as teacher leadership has gained prominence in the recent literature (Little, 2003). Second, according to Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, and Yashkina, (2007), much of teacher leadership research generated within the last five years is primarily focused on understanding distributive leadership. This intertwining of the evolving fields of teacher leadership and distributed leadership is indicative of the influence each plays upon the other's evolution and implementation.

Murphy (2005) asserts, after an extensive review of the literature, that teacher leadership development can be categorized as addressing either role-based strategies (position) or community-based strategies (process). These two categories will be used to organize the research literature presented in an effort to support understandings generated through this study. A brief overview of role-based and community-based strategies is presented prior to reviewing the empirical work of the field.

From the role-based perspective, Murphy (2005) contends that formal teacher leadership positions came about in the 1980's and early 1990's. Some of these positions, such as union representative, department head, committee chair, professional development facilitator and lead, master or mentor teacher, brought about a shift in the definition of teaching duties. In contrast to Berry and Ginsberg's (1990) description of the teaching profession as an "incredibly flat career structure" (p. 617), role-based strategies create differentiation in teacher roles and responsibility levels. These formal roles were perceived as individually focused quasi-administrative experiences that addressed specific tasks. As a result, a previously non-existent hierarchical structure in teaching emerged, resulting in a new level of middle management in schools.

Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) claim that community-based strategies evolved significantly over the last 15 years. In this view, it is not the *position* of a formal role, but the *process* of interactions as influenced by personal power (Hersey & Natemeyer, 1979) or social influence. Recognized for inclusivity and collective characteristics, community-based strategies contribute to the development of distributed leadership and professional learning community practices, as well as charting a new direction in teacher leadership. Frost and Durrant (2003a) affirm that this developmental approach transcends narrow, hierarchical structures and traditional perceptions of teachers' roles. The scope of responsibilities and learning tasks becomes leveled to incorporate the talents and contributions from all individuals within the school environment.

Research Related to Role-Based Strategies

Waller (1932) and Jackson's (1968) early reports of teacher and school practices provide a starting point for understanding the evolution of teacher leaders' roles. In *Sociology of Teaching*, Waller's descriptive narrative of teacher routines and roles detailed the everyday practices of teachers in school. Up until this point, the complexity of teachers' roles had not been delineated nor had their work been formally reported or analyzed in the research literature. Waller's straightforward account of the responsibilities of teaching provided insight that illuminated the salience of teachers' influence in schools. Waller stated, "The reformation of the schools must begin with the teachers, and no program that does not include the personal rehabilitation of teachers can ever overcome the passive resistance of the old order" (1932, p. 458). He refers to teachers' influence as a basic prerequisite of school improvement. And as Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) assert, it is the influence of teachers from which their leadership roles emerge.

Jackson (1968) provided a deeper perspective of school life based on field observations and interviews collected over a two-year period from Chicago area teachers. Through Jackson's work, evidence pointed toward teachers' depth of influence in creating and sustaining the operational and cultural expectations of the school environment. The informal and accepted traditions and cultural norms of the inner-workings of schools were labeled by Jackson as the *hidden curriculum*. This term has become the standard for describing the unofficial, yet important nuances of school life and interactions therein. It is here, within these interactions and forms of school life, that

the roles of teacher leaders laid dormant until recently. Jackson's work alluded to the power of teachers and the potential of their influence. He referenced teachers' teaching and non-teaching roles as *interactive teaching*, the face-to-face interactions with students, and *preactive teaching*, what teachers do aside from their direct instructional responsibilities. In describing these two roles of teachers, Jackson stated, "Two aspects of the teacher's work are so fundamental and have so many implications for educational matters that it deserves some kind of official recognition" (p. 148). Jackson's preactive teaching category is inclusive of teacher leadership and his endorsement promoted the merit and investigation of the phenomenon.

Within the domain of the hidden curriculum, teachers' transparent influence lingered until the early 1970's, when the seminal work of Lortie (1975) recognized teacher leadership as a salient career role. Lortie utilized the methodologies of historical review, in-depth interviews, observation and national and local surveys to examine "genuine insights into the nature of teaching as an occupation" (p. ix). Lortie's findings revealed that conditions promoting teachers' sense of efficacy, a supportive culture for continuous learning, and an increased understanding of the change process, are all important factors that teachers need to experience in order to encourage change in schools and in their own roles as influential teachers.

Since the beginning of the reform era of the 1980s, accountability in education has become deeply entrenched in school culture. As is evident in the literature of that era, educational improvement was believed to be most successfully accomplished by the people who were best suited to resolve school problems first hand--- the teachers

(Bachrach & Conley, 1989; Firestone & Bader, 1992). York-Barr and Duke (2004) contend leadership roles were unique to each context, thus making comparison across research studies difficult. These teacher leader roles, inclusive of, but not limited to, team leaders, coaches, mentors, and curriculum facilitators, were created to enhance school reform and promote increased professionalism and student achievement. Incentives such as merit pay and career ladder recognition were offered to augment the status of these new middle management roles.

In 1990, Smylie and Denny conducted a study of thirteen teacher leaders to examine the implementation of teacher leadership roles in a large school district. Several implications related to teacher leadership were drawn from this study. First, results indicated that teachers perceived themselves to be advocates for colleagues in the classrooms, but also as instrumental in influencing professional development in a variety of capacities throughout their district. Smylie and Denny also discovered that teacher leaders were concerned about balancing responsibilities inside the classroom and throughout the school because of time limitations. They found no evidence of clear-cut leadership expectations and determined no definitive conceptualization of teacher leadership. Smylie and Denny concluded that teacher leadership roles "may be influenced substantially by the organizational contexts in which they are established" (p. 256). If teacher leadership is defined by context and the community influences the school, then the complexities of the community ultimately influence the roles and interactions of teacher leaders.

Hart (1990) compared the career ladders of two junior high schools in the western United States. The roles of teacher leader and teacher specialist were created under a career ladder framework that included 50% of teachers from each school. Work beyond the classroom was compensated with stipends, and teacher leaders' and specialists' work roles were specified by each school. Primary data collection included field observations and structured and unstructured interviews that were conducted over the course of a school year. Study results indicated leadership became a school-wide resource rather than an individual characteristic; but the participating schools had dissimilar experiences. One school of teacher leaders and specialists saw needs and worked collegially to fill instructional and professional gaps. The other school's career ladder teachers questioned the appropriateness of their duties and failed to work collaboratively to benefit the school.

Wasley's classic (1991) *Teachers Who Lead: The Rhetoric of Reform and The Realities of Practice* explores a two week period of three teacher leaders' lives via observations and interviews. The three case studies revealed that the differentiation of roles between teachers and teacher leaders was awkward due to the established norms of hierarchical leadership and the ill-defined nature of assigned roles. In addition, teacher leaders revealed that communication with peers was sporadic and disconnected; a lack of incentives for teachers did not encourage external involvement in school activities; and isolation and loneliness beyond their classroom experiences were factors that impacted their levels of professional role-taking and role-making.

In a case study of school management teams, Whitaker (1997) examined formal roles of teacher leadership. Acting as half-day classroom teachers and part-time assistant

principals, teacher leaders collectively worked with their elementary school principal to share in school decision-making processes. Results from this three-year study indicated that staff collaboration and buy-in are crucial to cooperation in promoting school goals and that a clear definition of teacher leader roles is imperative for management success.

Research Related to Community Strategies

Lieberman and Miller (2004) assert that when teacher leaders focus upon the relational aspect of leadership they take on the role of "stewards for an invigorated profession" (p. 13). The research conducted in this area has been mostly qualitative, as evidenced by many small case studies and ethnographies (e.g., Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 2000; Little, 1995; Troen & Boles, 1994). Teacher leadership literature has shifted from examining the relational component of teacher leader and administrator perceptions to the study of teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student influences. Recent teacher leadership studies have focused upon the correlation between student achievement and teacher leadership (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009; Firestone & Heller, 1995; Manno & Firestone, 2008). This segment of the research review will report both the teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student relational effects of teacher leadership.

Teacher-to-teacher influence. ***Collegiality.*** Zahorik (1987) sought to examine collegiality among teachers as related to classroom instruction. Perceptions of 52 teachers from six schools were collected to analyze teacher dialogue as it pertained to context and participants. Findings indicated that teachers spent an average of 40 minutes a day discussing instructional topics, whereas 20 minutes a day was spent in social talk. Furthermore, peer-to-peer observations were minimal, and informal observations did not

include post-conferencing to enhance professional growth. All teachers in this study expressed their belief in the importance of teacher-to-teacher dialogue, whereas university courses, professional literature and in-service courses were seen as providing less support for professional growth.

As a follow-up to the 1990 study, Smylie (1992a) surveyed 116 teachers in a district to study teachers' insights into their decision-making processes. Using a 4-point Likert Scale, teachers were asked to rate their beliefs concerning their own decision-making capacity, their perceived relationships with administrators and peers and their self-assessed levels of responsibilities in working with students. Findings from the survey data indicated that teachers who had more positive interactions (collaborative and supportive) with their principals experienced greater participation in school decision-making processes. The teacher-principal relationship was found to be the single strongest influence on teachers' willingness to engage in decision-making processes.

In a follow-up analysis of the 1992a data, Smylie (1992b) examined the relationships between teacher leaders and classroom teachers in order to compare the findings of the teacher-administrator study. Findings indicated that the interactions between teachers and teacher leaders were more likely to increase if formal work roles were made clear and professional beliefs were similar. These findings were not found to be as powerful as the teacher-principal data, but they show the importance of positive interactions for professional and organizational growth.

Troen and Boles (1992) explored six teacher leaders' conflicted sense of betwixt and between (Turner, 1967) in their roles as classroom teachers and school decision-

makers. Teachers who sought to affect change beyond their classrooms related that a sense of being neither one nor the other was generated in their efforts to operationalize dual capacities. In addition, a reduction in peer interactions resulted in isolation from other classroom teachers. Troen and Boles also confirmed from teacher leaders' perspectives that the focus of teacher leaders' practices primarily centered on their ability to improve instruction and to effectively implement curriculum to optimize student learning. Study conclusions indicated that teacher leaders viewed their roles as teachers to be of highest importance in their schema of priorities, while their roles as teacher leaders were perceived to be secondary.

LeBlanc and Shelton (1997) reported the perceptions of five teacher leaders and their views of their leadership roles. Premised within daily forms of leadership acts rather than leadership roles, LeBlanc and Shelton identified two themes in their work. First, teacher leaders demonstrated a need for achievement. This took form in their need to stay abreast of current practices and to maintain a high level of competence in their instructional skills. Being intrinsically motivated was associated with their desire to perform inside and outside the classroom. The second need that emerged from this study, affiliation with peers, stemmed from the need to be accepted by peers. In association with this need, emotional intelligence or sensitivity to relationship cues was also found to be an important trait for teachers to traverse professional activities.

Frost and Durrant (2002) contend that teacher leaders must be coached and mentored in order to nurture their leadership skills, increase their confidence and self-esteem and improve their creative abilities. In their research, Frost and Durrant

interviewed 12 teacher leaders who had consistently demonstrated teaching effectiveness in order to identify supportive professional development practices. These practices in turn were used to create a framework for future professional development planning. Noting that other studies took a top-down approach, this study began with a ground-up perspective, which promoted teacher involvement from the inception of the project. Practices that teacher leaders identified as useful in building their own skills were a supportive environment, a learning culture open to experimentation, and an increase in professional knowledge through collaboration.

Muijs and Harris (2007) compared teacher leadership development in three schools. These three schools were involved in a larger teacher leadership study that identified various levels of teacher leadership support in participating schools. In semi-structured interviews, administrators, quasi-administrators, teacher leaders and classroom teachers from each of the three schools were asked to share examples of teacher leadership. Conclusions drawn from the interviews indicated that a supportive school culture must be in place for teacher leadership to thrive. Regular interactions contributed to creating and sustaining strong staff relationships. Open communications with established levels of trust were also found to be consistent in schools that supported teacher leadership.

Angelle and Schmid (2007) collected data from principals and teacher leaders in elementary, middle, and high school contexts to determine their conceptualizations of teacher leadership. As Angelle and Schmid stated, “Teacher leadership was defined in terms of how it was lived in the context of the individual school” (p. 793). Significant

findings indicate that high school respondents associated teacher leadership roles with classroom level expertise and not with decision-making in the school. In contrast, elementary and middle school respondents viewed teacher leaders as personnel who contributed to decision-making processes. Overall, participants defined themselves as teacher leaders based on their interactions with other teachers. These interactions, rather than formal roles, were the foundation of what they believed to be teacher leadership within their schools.

Through the course of a 12-year, multi-phase study of teacher leadership, Crowther, Ferguson, and Hann's (2009) work with hundreds of schools in Australia, identified a framework of capacities that teacher leaders exhibit. As a result of their extensive research, specific traits were identified and organized into their *Teachers as Leaders Framework*. This framework states that teacher leaders convey hope, facilitate learning communities, strive for instructional excellence, address educational challenges, problem-solve, and promote a culture of success.

Content knowledge and instructional expertise. Odell (1997) stated, "One cannot be an effective teacher leader if one is not first an accomplished teacher" (p. 122). Cohen (1991), Little (1995), and Manno and Firestone's (2008) research found that teachers' knowledge of subject matter is related to the quality of their practice as teacher leaders. Cohen's ethnographies of five secondary teachers offered a window into the life experiences of seasoned teachers, capturing glimpses of their craft knowledge and individual theories on teaching and learning. Their knowledge of subject matter and their

connections with peers in their individual school contexts were described as variables that contributed to their roles as team leaders.

Little (1995) initially sought to examine the process of high school restructuring, but inadvertently discovered the complexity of teacher leadership as it related to content expertise. Two restructured high schools provided the context of this study, in which 53 teacher leaders participated in interviews to share their perceptions of the restructuring process. Results indicated that teachers' mastery of content lead to their selection as department chairs, and they were perceived to be highly influential in their roles as teacher leaders.

Ovando (1996) found that when teachers incorporated leadership roles in their professional practices, innovation in instructional practices increased and student learning was positively influenced. In a study of 132 teachers from various levels (elementary, middle and high school), teachers' perceptions of their dual duties of teaching and leading were explored. Results indicated that teacher leaders faced difficulties balancing time in the classroom with time spent on leadership activities during non-instructional time; the need for continuous professional development not only to enhance instructional practices, but to address leadership skills; and issues related to mentally shifting from teacher to leader and leader to teacher mind frames in order to be effective in classroom and school tasks.

In independent studies, Griffin (1995) and King, Louis, Marks, and Peterson (1996) concluded that pedagogy, school culture and teacher quality are positively influenced by the interactions of teacher leaders. Over the course of three years, Griffin

interviewed five teacher leaders to determine their perceptions of decision-making practices associated with school reform efforts. Results indicated that teacher decision-making impacted student evaluations, curriculum frameworks, school policies related to student behavior issues, and technology integration. However, teachers perceived limited classroom influence due to isolation, low self-efficacy, school politics, and burnout from a large amount of decision-making responsibility.

King, Louis, Marks, and Peterson (1996) investigated school reform efforts of 24 schools that were transitioning to participatory governance models. Of four decision-making models identified, shared decision-making was found to be the most practiced among administrators and teachers in seven of the 24 schools. From within this sub-group of seven schools, six schools identified a positive relationship between the influences of shared decision-making and instruction as evidenced by student achievement outcomes.

In a study of seven professional development schools, Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995) generalized three tenets of collaboration among teacher leaders. Over a year's time, data were collected from surveys, observations, in-depth interviews, teachers' logs, and professional development school documents. Conclusions drawn from the case studies of this research included: teacher learning is an on-going process; teacher leadership is authentically interconnected to classroom and non-classroom tasks and roles to contribute toward collegial, rather than hierarchical, interactions; and these lateral approaches may produce a ripple effect that expand teacher roles and improve student learning capacities.

Suranna and Moss (1999) interviewed 12 elementary (K-6) school leaders to investigate the nature of teacher leadership. Participants' perceptions of teacher leadership revealed that: professional development was inclusive of mentoring new teachers and participation in committee work; exceptional teaching involved continuing education and the promotion of student empowerment; and teacher leaders were perceived to be willing to take a stand on issues. Two distinctions from instructional duties, time spent on non-classroom projects and interactions with principals, were also noted.

Krisko's (2001) study sought to identify characteristics of effective teacher leaders for the purpose of creating a profile to help in selecting candidates for leadership development. Characteristics were primarily associated with: (a) clearly communicating; (b) creating and imagining; (c) actively listening; and (d) being open to learning. Participants, formal and informal teacher leaders from pre-college and post-college career phases, responded in interviews to identify leadership characteristics based upon their own experiences. Conclusions determined that eight specific traits are critical to the teacher leader profile. Krisko concluded that teacher leaders must be: creative, reflective, flexible, lifelong learners, willing to find humor, willing to take responsibility, afforded a good intrapersonal sense, and willing to demonstrate strong interpersonal skills.

Manno and Firestone (2008) interviewed and observed eight math and science teacher leaders to distinguish the effects of teacher content knowledge. Four teachers were categorized as content experts and the other four teacher leaders were not identified as such. The purpose of the study was to learn how teacher leaders' work improved

teaching practices. Results indicated that content experts were able to identify student deficiencies and were perceived to be curricular resources by their peers. As a curricular resource, content experts gained the trust and established greater rapport with their peers, while reducing their own need for additional professional development.

Teacher-to-student influence. Teacher leadership has been proposed as a factor in determining school effectiveness. Sammons, Hillman, and Mortimer (1995) describe effective schools as ones that have achieved a high rate of consistency in practice, congruence in values and success in student achievement. Since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001, otherwise known as No Child Left Behind Act, school effectiveness has been primarily based upon student achievement as measured by student performance on standardized tests. In the current climate of accountability, researchers have explored the possibility that teacher leadership acts as an influential variable on student performance. The influence of teacher leadership on student learning has fueled an increase in interest in teacher leadership. The following studies are evidence of this renewed interest.

The behavior of teacher leaders in middle school mathematics classrooms was the focus of Cruz's (2003) work. Interviews and observations of teacher classroom behaviors were used as the primary data collection methods. Findings indicated that teacher leaders incorporated direct instruction, cooperative learning and problem-solving strategies related to real world examples. Further results documented that teacher leaders interacted with students during 93% of all instructional time. The high level of

interaction and use of engaging learning strategies suggest that a correlation between learning and engagement exists.

Berry, Johnson, and Montgomery (2005) found that teacher leadership played a central role in their examination of school improvement. Set in a rural system, teacher learning and collegial efforts were examined and found to be influential in school improvement. Driven by the need to improve student learning, focused professional development became a key factor in building teachers' skills. Using various learning groups, school-wide committees, and grade-level teams that teachers led to build a community of learning, teachers became empowered to not only advance student learning, but to advance their own professional capacity through efforts to gain National Board certification.

And finally, in their case study, Boone, Hartzman, and Mero (2006) related school improvement to the empowerment of teachers as instructional leaders. Based upon the distributed leadership model, teachers in this study engaged in monthly professional development with parents, provided consistent instructional coaching with peers, and visited and observed best practices in other schools to improve student learning. The results revealed that school improvement was enhanced, as indicated by increased graduation rates, student retention, and all-around academic performance.

The studies reviewed validate a ripple effect of the influence teacher leadership on peers, pupils and schools. Teacher leadership influences on student academic achievement makes a strong case for the promotion and development of the interactions and processes involved with the instructional roles of teacher leaders. Findings suggest

that these interactions are not only important for student achievement, organizational operation, and collegial school climates, but are also reciprocal as teachers seek professional fulfillment.

Urban Teacher Leadership Research

Introduction

If teacher leadership is lived in the context of the individual school as Angelle and Schmid (2007) assert, then the challenges of the urban environment add yet another layer of complexity to understanding the development of teacher leaders. Conclusions drawn from York-Barr and Duke's (2004) and Murphy's (2005) reviews note that the literature base for teacher leadership is limited in scope and variety; therefore, any sub-fields under the subject of teacher leadership are limited even further. In my investigation of urban teacher leadership, the previous statement has proven to be true, as evidenced by the small number of studies of urban teacher leadership published in the literature. Therefore, the importance of my study increases because the inclusion of this research will broaden the field's knowledge base and advance understandings of how urban teacher leaders develop, operationalize and negotiate their professional duties within and outside the boundaries of their roles as classroom teachers.

In examining research of urban teacher leadership, issues of equity and the evolvement of multiple roles in individual teacher leader practices were found to be significant themes. These two research strands provide the organizer for this portion of the literature review. After the review of urban teacher leadership has been completed, a summary of the significant points of this chapter will provide closure to this segment of the dissertation report.

Equity Issues

In an effort to address learning needs of children of poverty, a study was commissioned by initial legislation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to distinguish key factors that contribute to children's learning. The Coleman Report (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York 1966) concluded that equal educational opportunities resulting in student achievement are not impacted by school resources such as teacher quality, facilities or curriculum. Rather, the report determined that a child's family background and the effects of peers were the greatest determinants for student achievement. In addition, consistent research has determined that school performance of children from low-income families has fallen behind their more affluent peers, and African-American students continue to perform below that of Whites (Farley & Allen 1989; Kalmijin & Kraaykamp, 1996).

In contrast, *The Task Force on Teacher Leadership,* as reported by Darling-Hammond (2001), asserts that "the ability of teachers is one of the most powerful determinants of student achievement—more influential, in fact, than poverty, race, or the educational attainment of parents" (p. 6). Refuting The Coleman Report, *The Task Force on Teacher Leadership* suggests that teachers hold immense influence. If so, does that mean that teacher leaders garner even greater influence? And if they do, then concentrated numbers of teacher leaders may be able to create a synergy that can work to establish more productive learning environments for all.

Delpit (1997), Hilliard (1991), Ladson-Billings (2001), and Moses and Cobb (2001) shared concerns that initiatives that have attempted to promote teacher leadership

in urban schools will continue to fail unless the voices of families and community members at-large are included. From this stance, Hilliard (1991) recommended that teacher leaders must not only challenge the status quo of operational and instructional concerns, but must also challenge societal assumptions regarding children of color. Hilliard formed this conclusion based on samples of schools where teacher leadership inequities were addressed.

Beachum and Denith (2004) selected 25 teacher leaders from five urban schools that were noted for applying school-based management approaches and including teacher leaders in the decision-making processes. Open-ended interviews and field observations were used to collect data. Three significant themes that supported teacher leadership were found: community involvement (teacher led youth league sports and arts programming), particular organizational patterns and school structures (grade-level and content area teaming and extensive committee work), and certain processes and identities that teacher leaders maintained (freedom in curricular decision-making and qualities of risk-taking, trust and caring). Teacher and administrator roles were collaborative and trusting. All decision-making processes were based on the central question of "How will these decisions benefit students?" Teacher leaders held a great deal of responsibility outside the classroom and were considered confident and capable in taking on new roles. From the data provided regarding the participation in the decision-making process, it is clear that these schools did not operate from a traditional model, but from a more distributive form of leadership.

Haycock (1998) and Ingersoll's (1999) research examined disparities in the content knowledge of urban teachers as compared to their suburban counterparts. If, as Cohen (1991), Little (1995), and Manno and Firestone (2008) contend, content expertise is influential in promoting teacher leadership roles, then Haycock's examination of teacher content knowledge as correlated to schools of White and non-White student populations points toward a deficit not only in urban teacher content knowledge, but also in urban teacher leadership capacity. After examining a national data set of test results measuring teacher content knowledge, Haycock determined that minority children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, receive sub-standard instruction as compared to their affluent and White peers. Scores revealed that teachers who did not score high in content areas were more likely to be assigned to schools whose student populations were largely non-white and dominated by the influences of poverty.

From secondary education, Ingersoll (1999) identified discrepancies in urban and non-urban secondary teachers' content knowledge in all the core curriculum areas by studying the number of educators teaching out of field. Examining data from *The Schools and Staffing Survey* sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics, out-of-field teaching was measured to be more evident in schools with high poverty rates than in more affluent schools. In addition, Ingersoll applied a multivariate analysis to determine that teachers who did teach out of field also experienced less self-efficacy and a "decreases in morale and commitment" (p. 29). This added layer of difficulty further places the urban teacher at a disadvantage because of feeling less empowered and

confident, which according to Lortie (1975) and Frost and Durrant (2002) does not promote a school climate that encourages teacher leadership.

Over a three year period, Lipman (1999) collected evidence from observations, school and system documents, and interviews with students, teachers, and administrators to explore perceptions of teachers and administrators in two southern schools that implemented teacher leader reform strategies. Issues of race, power, and class limited the abilities of teacher leaders and their peers to establish and maintain professional empowerment through school improvement strategies. Lipman revealed how power in one junior high school was wielded by white, middle class parents; whereas efforts to reform another junior high school were undermined by projecting feelings of inferiority toward African American students.

Multiplicity of Roles

Jacobson (2005), Waters and McNulty (2005), Nevarez and Wood (2007), and Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) contend that formal leadership capacity in urban schools is inferior. To address this deficit, distributed leadership has been suggested as a means to decentralize decision-making for the purpose of engaging all learning community members, regardless of role. Engagement in leadership from multiple sectors of urban schools has been noted in the following research.

Miles, Saxl, and Lieberman (1986) describe their study of 17 urban teachers and their various roles in multiple school contexts. The teacher leaders were asked to differentiate what they knew before and after accepting their new formal leadership roles. Based upon observational and interview data, Miles, Saxl and Lieberman identified 18

skills that contributed toward building collegiality in schools. These skills were grouped into six main sets: building trust and rapport, understanding school culture and organization, dealing with the process, managing work, using resources and building skill and confidence in others. Further findings were reported in the form of case studies, in which several teachers-leaders shared their own personal leadership approaches as they negotiated the culture and expectations of their own urban schools. These efforts to build rapport and establish their own job descriptions were critical in teacher leaders' attempts to become accepted as formal resources by other teachers in their schools. The relational aspect of collegiality was determined to be a complex process, and isolation among teachers pervaded school climates and impacted their professional practice.

Heller and Firestone (1995) concluded that rather than prescribed by a role, leadership functions are carried out through various personnel who work toward the completion of multiple tasks. In a program implementation study of eight urban schools, leadership change factors were recognized: (a) as a collective process, never an isolated function; (b) as essential for involvement in supportive decision-making based upon peer observations rather than scripted role expectations; and (c) as tasks or functions that were fulfilled by individuals who held various roles. Results beyond the study's original intent revealed that leadership "functions are performed redundantly by people in a variety of overlapping roles" (p. 65) and that when teachers are included, they have a unique and important contribution of their own to make.

Swanson, Snell, Koency, and Berns (2000) sought to identify qualities of ten urban middle school teacher leaders who played influential roles in their school reform

efforts. Data collection methods included interviews, job shadowing, reflective journals, and observations. Based on these and other data, teacher affiliations, subject matter expertise, professional development and professional duties and teacher leader traits, were documented. Findings indicated that teacher leaders' influence upon curriculum implementation was substantial and that the teacher leaders' contributions to school curriculum reform efforts validated and reinforced teacher leadership in the urban settings studied.

In an attempt to understand retention variables that directly impact sustainability in services, Goode, Quartz, Barrazza-Lyons, and Thomas (2004) collected survey data from 417 urban teachers. Results indicated that within the duties and roles of participants who had been in the profession 1-6 years, an average of five professional development and leadership roles were identified per person, in addition to their contracted classroom responsibilities. A breakdown of sub-populations of participants showed that teachers who considered themselves lifetime educators, on average, reported that three additional roles had been adopted. Whereas, teachers who were eager to leave the profession as soon as possible, listed six additional roles they had assumed. Results also indicated that teachers remained in the field due to their enjoyment of working with students, interest in content knowledge, and a desire to make a difference in the world. Those teachers who did remain in the urban context were more likely to assume more influential leadership roles due to their sustainability and willingness to contribute to their learning community.

Urban teacher leadership research has a small, but significant presence in the existing teacher leadership literature. Equity issues and multiplicity of roles impact

teacher leaders' performance within the urban context. Teacher leaders who work in this context contend with greater challenges and societal issues than non-urban teacher leaders. Research from the field remains incomplete and is in need of studies designed to create knowledge that can assist and support students, educators and schools that face the greatest challenges.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Through this review of teacher leadership literature, a base of empirical understanding has established the significance of this phenomenon. Teacher leadership has an important role in contributing to the future evolvement of education, based on increased understandings of teacher leaders' decision-making abilities, influence of school-wide policies, pedagogical skill strength and interpersonal adeptness. Teacher leadership has been found to be an interconnected activity that contributes toward school-wide leadership capacity. To maximize their synergistic capability, teacher leaders form relationships with peers to engage in professional learning communities and effectively support student learning. Teacher leaders are recognized as content and instructional experts who can provide meaningful peer support, if sufficient time is afforded to them. These in-context contributions, when paired with supportive administrators, can contribute significantly toward the development of effective schools.

Teacher leadership can contribute to strengthening urban leadership capacity. The role teacher leadership plays in urban leadership growth has an even greater significance than in other kinds of schools. If as Elmore (2006) asserts, leadership is a human development enterprise, then there is much work to be done to fortify leadership in the urban context. The addition of this study's participants' voices to the literature

brings a broader perspective to the existing field of research and provides insight to the abilities of urban teachers to build leadership capacity to strengthen schools and meet student needs.

The literature presented in this chapter points toward the importance of teacher leadership as a critical component of school leadership. The literature on urban contexts, role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, and especially urban teacher leadership, contributes to understanding participants' perspectives in this study as their journeys and leadership assertion choices are examined. It is imperative that the voices of teacher leaders be given a platform from which to share their stories and offer insight into their own leadership development. From this foundation, I now turn to explaining the methodology of how participants' stories were collected and analyzed. Chapter 3 describes this research process.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

> How individuals recount their histories – what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience – all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned. (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p. 1)

To understand the leadership development of the five urban elementary teachers in this study, I needed to learn about the transformation of their professional roles and identities as teachers and teacher leaders. Their stories, or narratives, provided the means by which they related their unique personal experiences of leadership development. In capturing the individual narratives of leadership attainment through the methodologies of narrative analysis and analysis of narrative, I focused upon the hows and whys of their development. By collecting their narratives and analyzing their stories, I hoped to learn about leadership in such a way that urban teacher leadership development could be strengthened and expanded

Methodological Approaches

Through narrative, the stories of leaders can be revealed, explored, and reconstructed to build case studies of participants' experiences (Merriam, 1998). Narratives are defined by Ricoeur (1992) as linguistic expressions of human experience as related through life's actions. Polkinghorne (1988) maintains that "at the individual level, people have a narrative of their own lives, which enables them to construe what

they are and where they are headed. At the cultural level, narratives also give cohesion to shared beliefs and transmit values" (p. 14).

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative inquiry is the "study of the ways humans experience the world" (p. 2). Narrative inquiry is a method by which storied knowledge is captured. Polkinghorne (1995) suggests that narrative inquiry has two distinct categories: analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. Analysis of narrative uses stories as data sets to glean categories or typologies to explain the meaning within the stories. Narrative analysis identifies "action, events, and happenings" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 6) to produce an analysis that takes form in stories or narrative.

For this study, both narrative analysis and analysis of narrative were chosen because (a) a voice will be given to often unheard stories of urban elementary teacher leaders and (b) insight into the role of teacher leadership can be more clearly illuminated through retelling authentic experiences in narrative form. To examine the stories closely, analysis of narrative and narrative analysis will provide a perspective on the teachers and their lived experiences as they have adapted the roles of leadership in the urban context. I will discuss narrative analysis and then analysis of narrative before explaining the participant selection process.

Narrative Analysis

Polkinghorne (1988) states that the purpose of narrative analysis is "to answer how and why a particular outcome came about" (p. 19). Through narrative analysis, data from interviews and journal reflections were collected so that the participants and I could co-construct stories of teacher leadership development in temporal phases (Reissman,

1993). Polkinghorne (1995) explains the researcher's role in a narrative analysis as a storyteller who sifts out pertinent elements of data and reports the data in storied accounts. Taking this approach to building a connected data set, the narrative or story creates a contextualized framework for presenting the phenomena in such a way that meaning can be made from the narrative (Polkinghorne, 1988). This narrative analysis of teacher leadership contains rich, contextualized participant stories. The narrative is an expository tool to inform readers of transpired events. Readers gain knowledge, which may inform their future practices, and insight into the development of current and future urban teacher leadership capacities. Details of how data were collected, analyzed, and turned into narratives are presented later in this chapter.

Analysis of Narrative

Analysis of narrative, also explained by Polkinghorne (1995), is an analytic approach that treats stories as data to illuminate distinct themes and create generalizations. This methodology requires the researcher to become a story analyst rather than a storyteller. Examining the data from interviews and reflections, I used the theoretical frames of role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership and urban teacher leadership to identify themes, patterns, and relationships. Drawn from this process of repeatedly reviewing the data, several perspectives on teacher leadership emerged; thus providing insight to participants' experiences. This insight is the focus through which findings were generated for each participant in Chapter 4 and in the cross-case analysis presented in Chapter 5.

Selection Instrument

Before the data were collected, I had to select participants. After reviewing the literature, I determined that a selection instrument was needed to identify potential candidates. The following sections describe the creation and administration of the instrument.

Creation of Selection Instrument

Prior to identifying qualified participants, I needed to identify teacher leader characteristics. In my review of the teacher leadership literature, I investigated criteria from several scholars and found that there is no single definition of teacher leadership or a prescribed set of characteristics for teacher leaders. In order to glean the most commonly agreed upon characteristics, I identified prominent scholars based upon the number of citations found in the literature and the number of publications they had contributed to the field. I did not limit my search to scholars from the United States, but included works from Great Britain, Canada, and Australia because contributions from these countries have been influential and compose a large segment of teacher and distributed leadership research.

Once a list of ten scholars' works was created, I generated a table that listed the scholars' names by column and significant characteristics each had identified by row. I then checked each cell that correlated with scholars and teacher leadership traits. See Appendix A for Summary of Teacher Leader Characteristics from the Literature. Traits that were most commonly identified were then transferred into a checklist and formatted for ease of use. Sixteen most commonly identified teacher leadership characteristics emerged from this process. The Teacher Leadership Nomination Form is included as

Appendix B. An Administrator Nomination Letter to explain the Teacher Leadership Nomination Form is also included as Appendix C.

Administration of Selection Instrument

I sought permission to conduct this study from the school system, university, and campus principals. See Appendix D for a copy of the Campus Consent form. I approached three principals individually and explained my need to identify participants. I explained that administrators, assistant principals, and curriculum instructional facilitators would nominate candidates who they perceived to be campus teacher leaders. Once principals agreed to this process, I then approached the other campus administrators, showed them a copy of the principal's permission letter and explained their potential role in this process. All administrators agreed to provide assistance in identifying potential participants.

The administrators were asked to confidentially and anonymously nominate four possible teachers as candidates from their own schools. Nominators listed names at the tops of each form (Appendix B) in rank order based on perceived leadership ability. Nominators then completed the selection instrument, checking each trait that they believed they had observed each nominee exhibit. If they did not recall the teacher exhibiting a characteristic, they were asked to leave the cell unchecked. Each nominator was asked to complete this form independently and to return it directly to me within a week. I provided an envelope for administrators to secure their completed forms and made arrangements with each nominator to pick up his or her completed forms. Upon

receipt of the completed nomination forms, I coded the back of each envelope and form with the first letter of the school initial and job description of nominator.

Participant Selection

My next task was to analyze the data for the nominated candidates. Upon processing the data, I sought permission from the highest scoring nominees to participate in the study. Details of this process and a description of volunteers who consented to participate are included in the following paragraphs.

Identification of Participants

I created a spreadsheet to organize data on the nominated participants for each school. On each school workbook page, a table was created with rows numbered 1-16 representing the list of 16 characteristics. The columns were organized by nominated teacher leaders and sub-categorized by the nominators for each potential participant. The nominators were coded as C (curriculum instructional facilitator), A (assistant principal), and P (principal). For Washington Elementary School, the nominators were labeled as A1 (assistant principal with the longest tenure), A2 (assistant principal with the shortest tenure), and P (principal). For each characteristic checked on the hand-written nomination form, I recorded that data digitally onto the spreadsheet and then added that amount to determine how many total traits each nominator identified for each participant. Below the trait total for each nominee, nominators' perceived rank order of leadership capacity was recorded. If a potential candidate was nominated by more than one campus nominator, I then added all the individual nominee scores to get a campus total. After calculating each nominee's total, I rank ordered all the nominees from highest to lowest scores from all the schools into one consolidated list. Those teachers who garnered the

highest scores among the three schools were then identified as possible teacher leaders to invite to participate in this study.

The results of the analysis initially determined that two participants each from Smith and Washington Elementary Schools and one participant from Johnson Elementary School were viable. However, after each candidate had been approached and agreed to participate, one participant from Washington Elementary School declined to participate. In revisiting the nominee list, the next highest scoring candidate, who was from Johnson Elementary School, was approached to participate. For the duration of the study, these five participants met all the requests of the study as formalized in the research participant contract (to be described below).

Descriptions of Participants

A brief introduction to the five participants is necessary to gain a general sense of the teacher leaders of this study. This preliminary information is provided to give the reader an introduction to each participant. Much more detail will be provided in the individual participant narratives in Chapter 4. To protect the confidentiality of participants, each has been assigned a pseudonym.

Dorothy was a Caucasian teacher in her early 60's who had a varied career in different school contexts and over 25 years of urban classroom experience. As the first grade team chairperson, she indicated that she felt a great deal of responsibility in communicating with teachers regarding information and negotiating any concerns between her team and the administration. Dorothy described herself as a *helper*.

Patty was a Caucasian teacher in her early 30's who had less than eight years experience and continued to teach in the same school and room where she completed her pre-service internship. Working toward an advanced degree in educational administration, Patty understood the significance of mentoring and reaching out to other new teachers. Her own challenging first two years in the classroom set a foundation of appreciation for peers and the need to collaborate.

Amy, a Caucasian teacher in her early 30's, was a team player. Her experience of seven years and her willingness to serve had pushed her to the forefront of leadership in her school. Experiencing diversity for the first time in her life, Amy's cultural perspective had been broadened, while at the same raising many questions about her place in this profession.

Penny was in her fifth year of teaching, and was in her late 20's. Although she was the youngest participant in this study, she had already begun to impress school and district administrators with her leadership abilities. As a young, Caucasian teacher, she was also working toward her advanced degree in educational administration. Having known that she always wanted to teach, Penny enjoyed the challenges of balancing classroom activities and school leadership responsibilities.

Joan brought a unique perspective to education as a second career teacher from the field of business. In her ninth year of teaching and in her mid-30's, Joan had experienced both urban and suburban contexts from which to draw experience and perspective. Coming from the same culture as her participant cohort, but from another

part of the country, Joan's perspective on teaching and leading provided a distinctive perspective to this study.

Study Contexts

Set in a large urban school system in the southeastern region of the United States, the basic contexts of this study are three urban elementary schools. Each school has a distinct history, yet many commonalities are shared that influence the operations of each school environment. Pseudonyms for school names are used to protect the confidentiality of participants' identities. Table 1**,** Table 2, and Table 3 provide demographic details of the school contexts, which are discussed in the proceeding sections.

Descriptions of Schools

Johnson, Smith, and Washington Elementary Schools were the school contexts of this study. Smith and Johnson Elementary Schools were represented by two participants each. Washington Elementary School was represented by one participant. The next few paragraphs offer overviews of student populations, faculty compositions, and notes of interest of each school context.

Johnson Elementary. Nestled within a demographically shifting neighborhood, this converted high school is now the educational home of 415 kindergarten through fifth grade students. At the time of the study, student sub-group populations were composed of White (50%), Black (38%), Hispanic (9%), and combined Pacific Islander, American Indian and Asian (3%) populations. Seven percent of the student body had been identified as English Language Learners, while the school maintains the highest mobility rate in the system (52%). Eighty-four percent of the students received free or reduced lunch. Many

Table 1. Student Populations.

Statistics	**Johnson**	**Smith**	**Washington**
Total Student Population	415	675	662
Mobility Rate	52%	32%	39%
English Language Learners	7%	1%	5%
Special Education Students	15%	15%	17%
Federal Lunch Program Participation	84%	91%	80%

Table 2. Subcategories of Student Populations.

Demographics	**Johnson**	**Smith**	**Washington**
White	50%	82%	69%
Black	38%	13%	23%
Hispanic	9%	4%	<7%
Asian, Indian, & Pacific Islander	3%	<1%	<1%

Table 3. Faculty Profiles.

Statistics		**Johnson**	**Smith**	**Washington**
Faculty Size		42	66	64
Faculty Educational Background	Bachelor	36%	39%	34%
	Masters	62%	50%	58%
	Educational Specialist	2%	9%	8%
	Doctorate	Not Applicable	2%	Not Applicable
Total Years of Experience	0-10	70%	Average 15 Years	52%
	11-20	19%		28%
	21+	11%		20%

of the students live in government subsidized housing and court and child and family services documentation has noted that many of the students' families are in crisis.

Instruction at Johnson Elementary School is provided by a Caucasian faculty, with the exception of one Asian teacher. Sixty-one percent of the teaching staff had less than six years of teaching experience at the time of this study. Only 30% of the staff had over 11 years teaching experience. Believing in the adage of "grow your own," the principal has made available multiple opportunities for professional development to her young staff and has worked hard to promote open communication. Making herself available throughout the course of the day and consistently practicing "management by walking around," teachers have commented upon feeling supported in their classrooms.

As part of the initial grant awards based on No Child Left Behind legislation, the school has implemented Reading First programs to improve student academic performance. The principal's grant-writing has generated funding for a school-wide behavior management program and a full-service school model. Partnerships within the community have also been attained through local businesses, non-profit organizations and the local university. Within a five year span, student performance has shown improvement and the school has attained adequate yearly progress the last three years. The school and the principal have garnered state and national accolades for their efforts toward raising student achievement as defined by No Child Left Behind mandates.

Smith Elementary. Smith Elementary School was established in 1976, but not until 1990 when the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) filed a lawsuit against the system did the school become integrated. The system's effort to bring equity to the school and

community took form in the provision of magnet funds to enhance instruction and attract diversity through resources such as modern technology and additional teachers. In 1996, the school was renovated and became a magnet school with a focus on technology. The intent of refocusing the school's curriculum through a magnet concept was to create a diverse student body by drawing students from outside the attendance zone into the school. Although the energy applied to this strategy has ebbed and flowed since its inception, the student population has remained predominately Black.

At the same time, the OCR mandate also required that teachers had to be equitably distributed across all system schools. Teachers were reassigned and Smith Elementary experienced an influx of new White teachers. Once the edicts of OCR had been met, non-community teachers were responsible for teaching Smith's children for the first time. As a result, the school experienced conflicts, as new teachers who were required to be there were often resentful about the change of their teaching assignments. Some teachers chose to bide their time and apply for a transfer, but some decided it was time to leave the profession. As one participant noted, "One day she [a teacher] put her purse on her arm and never came back."

To this day, faculty retention has continued to be a challenge. Sixty-four faculty members, two administrators, and three curriculum coaches, in addition to 34 instructional assistants, comprise the full-time staff along with many part-time system support personnel. The current staff is comprised of 15 Black and 49 White teachers. Forty teachers hold advanced degrees.

The total student population for the 2008-2009 school year was, 675, comprised of 82% Black, 13% White, 4% Hispanic, and less than 1% Asian students. Mobility rates are documented as 32 % and the school has consistently struggled to maintain adequate yearly progress as measured by federal guidelines. At the time of the study, they were labeled as Targeted Assistance for failing to meet adequate yearly progress for the 2007-2008 school year. As a Title I school, federal monies are provided to supplement teacher salaries, teaching assistant salaries, and instructional materials.

Washington Elementary. Washington Elementary School is a school of schools. As part of a restructuring effort in 1995, three older elementary schools were closed and consolidated into one large new school. The school had a population of 662 students at the time of the study. Of these students, 69% were White, 23% were Black, and less than 8% of the population was composed of Asian and Hispanic students. Eighty percent of students participated in the federal free and reduced lunch program. Washington also had a large population of students with a wide range of disabilities (17%) and a mobility rate of 39%. Fewer than 5% of the students were English Language Learners at the time of the study.

The attendance zone of this school encompasses two distinct areas, each having government subsidized apartments and homes. It has also been identified as an economic empowerment zone. Students are primarily supported by two-income families, and a large percentage of students have also been identified as living with relatives other than their parents. Businesses within and outside the community have offered financial support to Washington Elementary School.

Sixty of Washington Elementary's classroom teachers are White, while three Black, one Asian, and one Hispanic teacher make up the remaining certified staff. The majority of teachers (42%) have less than five years experience, while 38% have between 11-20 years experience, and 20% of the teachers have over 20 years experience. The majority of teachers hold masters' degrees from the local university.

Washington Elementary School has struggled to meet adequate yearly progress as defined by No Child Left Behind legislation. However, at the time of this study (2007-2008), Washington had met its adequate yearly progress goals. Two significant variables have contributed toward its current student achievement levels: 1) high student attendance rates (95.7%, two points above the state average) and; 2) a Campus Family Support manager, who works with families to remove achievement barriers for students as part of a special project funded by the school system and community resources.

Data Collection Methods

After recruiting participants and attaining appropriate documentation, data collection became the next step in the research process. Access and entry procedures were granted prior to conducting interviews and collecting journal reflections from participants. Details of how access and entry were gained and how data were collected are provided in the following sections.

Access and Entry Procedures

My five year relationship as a university intern supervisor allowed me the opportunity to establish a rapport with each administrator and teacher leader participant prior to implementing this study. Through these relationships, I had established a sense of trust and professional credibility. As noted above, upon approval of the school system

and the university, I made appointments with each principal to discuss the details of the study and to gain permission to conduct the study on her campus. Principals documented their approval of the study by signing the consent form (See Appendix D). Since I already had access to the school in the capacity of a university intern supervisor, gaining access to campus administrators and potential participants was straightforward and unrestricted.

Prior to all the participants' agreement to join in the study, I requested individual and confidential conferences with each candidate. During these meetings, I explained the study to each candidate and the role she would play in providing information about her experiences as an urban teacher leader. Upon agreement, each candidate signed a letter of informed consent and was given a copy for future reference. (See Appendix E for Participant Informed Consent Form). I emphasized to the participants that this was a volunteer opportunity to contribute to the teaching profession. They would not receive pay, they could choose not to participate at any time, and any data related to them would be destroyed upon the event of their withdrawal.

Interviews

Young and Tardiff (1992) observe that narrative analysis is especially challenging due to the complexity of collecting data. To collect the stories of these participants and to truly engage them in the co-construction process, I chose face-to-face, semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection for this study.

Initial teacher leader interviews consisted of open-ended questions and were conducted prior to the collection of journal reflections. Limiting the interviews to 45-60 minute sessions aided in maintaining the pace and quality of the content discussed, to

preserving a positive interview climate, and to motivating teachers to continue participation in this investigation. Three interviews were initially planned for each participant, and two additional interviews were budgeted per participant to ensure sufficient data collection opportunities. Only one participant required all five interviews, while the remaining participants completed four interviews each. In total, 21 interviews were conducted to gather data. Most interview sessions took place after school hours, but two interviews took place during teachers' planning time when students were in supplemental classes.

Semi-structured interviews, as described by Merriam (1998), are "...guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time" (p. 74). The initial interview of each participant was guided by identical, predetermined questions that were centered upon this study's focus; but questions were not asked in specific order or worded in exactly the same fashion. See Appendix F for the initial interview protocol.

Subsequent interview questions were generated for each participant based on the participants' unique, initial responses and journal reflections. During the interview process, the participants and I co-constructed (Kvale, 1996) information. This flexible format enabled participants and me to take advantage of impromptu opportunities during the interview conversations to gain deeper understanding of their perceptions of their development as teacher leaders. The co-construction process systematically looped between participant interviews, reflection submissions, review of interviews and

reflections, and creation of a new set of interview questions. This looping process was repeated for each participant.

After completion of the initial interview, I asked my faculty advisor to review transcriptions for any biases or novice researcher errors to improve future interviews. Taking his feedback, I made notes in the transcriptions to prevent any duplication of prior missteps. I, too, reviewed the transcripts and made my own notes in margins in an attempt to improve my interview skills. For my next interview, I made personal memos on post-it notes and attached these to my notepad to reference during the course of the interview.

All interviews were digitally recorded. After each interview, I transferred the audio files from the digital recorder to each participants' data folder on my computer. Audio files were labeled with participant's initials and the interview date. The audio files were then erased from the digital recorder. Once each audio file was transferred, labeled and organized on my computer, a copy of the data was backed up on a university server. Within a 24-hour period, I listened to the interview and made notes of my thoughts and observations. Some examples of these thoughts were my own questions of word selection in describing something or the absence of something was sometimes noted. I also attempted to make note of facial expressions, perceived emotion, animation, voice inflections, or any other external behaviors that indicated meaning for me while listening to and recalling the original interview.

I transcribed 20 of the 21 interviews. The first interview I outsourced to a reputable company that signed a confidentiality affidavit. After reviewing the initial

transcription, I concluded that it would be best to complete the transcription process myself. This was an arduous process, but one that I benefited from by gaining a deeper sense of the content. As I transcribed each interview, I labeled participants' responses and my questions and prompts with our respective first initials.

After each transcription was completed, I made a hard copy to place in the data notebook. These were filed according to the order of the data collection process for each participant. I then went back and reread the transcription to make hand-written notes, underline pertinent comments, and make any other notations to add insight regarding the data. When this notebook was not in use, it was secured in a locked file cabinet. The digital transcriptions were filed in participant data folders and backed up on a secure university server.

Participant Reflections

Research suggests that reflection provides a tool for understanding our lived experiences and guiding our future choices and actions (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Litton & Zeichner, 1996; Schon, 1983). In this study, participant reflections were used to promote "the kind of thinking that consists of turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration" (Dewey, 1933, p. 3). Schon (1992) views reflection as a means for teachers "to learn to tell good stories about their interventions, case studies of their practice that could serve as prototypes for others' replication and transformation" (p. 136). Furthermore, critical reflection, as opposed to factual reflection (which focuses upon the recall of events), allows teachers to engage in a critical self-analysis that can lead them to challenge their own teaching

beliefs and to take ownership of their actions (Korthagen, 1993; Sockman & Sharma, 2008). During the study, all participants engaged in critical reflection, although as Litton and Zeichner (1991) contend, this form of reflection is "complex and difficult to learn" (p. 45).

After the completion of the initial interview, I asked participants to reflect in writing upon a topic that had been discussed within the interview. The first set of reflections was participant-driven to give me further insight into critical issues that were important to them and direct me in devising questions for our next interview session. The reflections that succeeded later interviews were focused on specific issues assigned by me to clarify participants' interview responses.

I reviewed reflections immediately after submission. I did this to determine if the topic needed more clarification and to examine the content for any new insights that needed to be probed in the next fact-to-face interview. Just as in my review of interview transcriptions, I read and reread the reflections, making notes in the margins and underlining content that I perceived to be salient to understanding participants' stories.

Participants were given a choice of emailing reflections to me or submitting them in hard copy for me to pick up prior to subsequent interviews. I attempted to collect hard copy reflections at least two days in advance to prepare for the next interview. Sometimes these deadlines could not be met and timeframes had to be renegotiated to meet the needs of participants.

Once a review of each reflection was completed, I then stored the reflections on my computer. Like the interview data, I organized the digital copies in participant data

folders labeled with each participant's initials and the date of submission. A hard copy of the electronic version was then printed and filed in the data notebook after each hard copy of the previous interview transcript. For those participants who chose to submit a hard copy of their reflections, I filed the hard copy in the data notebook in the same manner. All hard copies of data were stored and secured in a data notebook. When this notebook was not in use, it was stored in a locked file cabinet in a secure location.

Overall, content from 21 interviews and 21 journal reflections was the primary data for this study. Secondary data consisted of teacher leader nominations submitted by school administrative personnel. Interviews spanned a three-month timeframe, and all transcriptions were completed within two months of concluding the interview process. Four participants completed four interviews and four reflections, and one participant completed five interviews and five reflections.

Data Analysis

My roles as the researcher became that of a storyteller and a story analyst (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). I chose to analyze the data using two types of narrative inquiry described by Polkinghorne (1995): narrative analysis and analysis of narrative. Narrative analysis takes an inductive approach to identifying data elements to build a connected data set in storied form (Hatch, 2002). Analysis of narrative is a form of qualitative data analysis that examines data to illuminate distinct themes and create generalizations (Polkinghorne, 1995). The rationale for using both data analysis approaches was to emphasize the data from both participants' (emic) perspectives using narrative analysis and the researcher's (etic) perspective using analysis of narrative to gain clarity and understanding of participants' development as urban teacher leaders.

Narrative Analysis

Turning first to the narrative analysis approach, the data collected from interviews and reflections became the content to be analyzed so that I could tell the story (i.e., write the narrative) of each participant. The participants and I worked together throughout the data collection process to co-construct their perspectives on their development as urban teacher leaders. Once the data were collected, I began the process of identifying significant points that were relevant to generating their narratives.

Story map. As the storyteller, I had to delve deep into the text to organize the data. I had to first revisit the interviews and reflections of participants by rereading the content many times. Since these narratives were forms of life and professional histories, I chose to use Riessman's (1993) concept of temporal ordering as the process by which I would organize participants' descriptions of their lived experiences and professional practices. A story map of salient stages of participants' lives and their careers was created to organize the content. This story map created a visual representation of the temporal ordering of each participant's life and career stages. Each story map was a five column table that was labeled by the life and career stages of Early Development, Beginning Professional, Maturing Professional, Teacher Leadership Development, and Urban Teacher Leadership Understandings.

Coding. As I began to read through the digital text with the story map in mind, I highlighted text in different colors to designate each stage represented in the story map. For instance, blue denoted early development; pink indicated beginning professional; yellow represented the maturing professional category; green related to text that

represented teacher leadership; and red represented the urban context. As each participant's data were read, text was identified and color coded according to its assigned color and column. When I finished with the color coding, I then copied each color coded set from the transcripts into the associated column of the story map. From this sorted data set, I examined the content and chronologically ordered salient life and professional events as a starting point for writing participants' narratives. This iterative process was conducted for each participant.

Retelling the stories. After identifying and mapping the various events in each participant's life, I then turned to the process of creating a story that captured the salient elements of these teachers' leadership journeys. The critical events and commentary from participants' data sets became the frames for organizing and telling the stories. Within these chronologically ordered events, I combined and sorted data elements to retell each participants' story by infusing the events with details and descriptions provided by the participants. Direct quotes were included in the narratives to give voice to participants' stories.

Analysis of Narrative

Coding. Turning to a more widely used method of analyzing data, an analysis of narrative approach was also employed to gain an understanding of the themes, patterns, and relationships to be found in the research data. Following Hatch's (2002, p. 153) *Steps in Typological Analysis*, I revisited the original data from interviews, reflections, and audio files to identify entries related to typologies adapted from the theoretical lenses of this study: role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership and urban

leadership. As I reread the data, I color coded according to the typologies (green for teacher leadership, red for role identity, purple for urban leadership and blue for distributed leadership). While color coding the entries, I began to see themes, patterns and relationships. I then reread the passages and labeled the passages in the margins for potential themes for each participant's data set.

Summary worksheets. After the data sets were coded, summary worksheets were created to organize themes, patterns, and relationships for each participant. Each of the five participants had a total of three summary worksheets (one each for themes, patterns, and relationships). These worksheets provided the foundation for identification, association, and location of data. An explanation of each data summary worksheet reveals the analysis and organization processes.

Theme worksheets were divided by columns headed by role identity, teacher leadership, urban leadership, and distributed leadership. As I revisited the potential themes identified in the coding process, I categorized each theme by the sub-headings of role identity, teacher leadership, urban teacher leadership, or distributed leadership. For example, all green coded themes were recorded on the teacher leadership section with a notation of the interview or reflection number and page number of the supporting data. A summary statement was recorded to capture the main idea of the text. Each time a new entry supported a theme, I made a hash mark beside the term and made note of the source of data and page number.

To organize the patterns worksheet, sections of rows were organized by role identity, teacher leadership, urban leadership, and distributed leadership. Column

headings were labeled according to Hatch's (2002) description of types of patterns: frequency (occurs often), sequence (occurs in a certain order), correspondence (occurs in relation to other activities) and causation (one seems to cause the other). Themes that had received the greatest emphasis in the themes worksheet were listed in rank order within role identity, teacher leadership, urban leadership, or distributed leadership categories. Summary statements were generated to make associations according to sequence, correspondence or causation and recorded in the appropriate sections of the table.

The relationship worksheet was organized in a similar fashion as the patterns worksheet, that is, in table format with row alignment labeled by role identity, teacher leadership, urban leadership, and distributed leadership. Column headings were denoted by the four types of relationships as referenced by Hatch (2002). These four types of relationships are inclusion (one is a type of another), rationale (one is reason for doing another), cause effect (one is a result of another), and means end (one is a way to do another). Once again, themes were revisited to make connections according to the type of relationships identified. I recorded these relationships in their appropriate places within the table. For example, a phrase such as *being a leader is a way to help others* was assigned to the means end relationship column within the teacher leadership row.

When all the relevant entries had been identified as themes, patterns and relationships, the data were examined once again to check for any discrepancies or non-examples. Specific page numbers in data sources were revisited to identify data excerpts to verify generalizations. The products of each case analysis were then reviewed and

formatted for presentation in the analysis sections that follow the narratives reported in Chapter 4.

Cross-case Analysis

A cross-case analysis is a systematic examination of data from multiple case studies to identify relationships and patterns across-cases (Merriam, 1988). In this study, findings from the narrative analysis and analysis of narratives for each of the five teacher leaders were compared. The results of this cross-case analysis are reported in the first section of Chapter 5.

My cross-case analysis started with a review of data from each of the individual cases. I created a table listing participants' initials at the top of the table columns, then listed findings from the two previous analyses in rows. As findings were categorized, a check was placed in the box of each participant for whom each finding applied. This iterative process continued until all the findings had been identified for each participant. After going through each participant's data set, I then reviewed the data that had consistent checks across the board for each participant. These were then highlighted. I copied the common findings into a separate table and made distinctions among those based on likenesses within the categories of role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, and urban teacher leadership. These cross-case findings are presented in Chapter 5.

Trustworthiness

Morse, Barrett, Olson, Mayan, and Spiers (2002) contend that research without rigor "is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility" (p. 14). In traditional approaches to research, rigor is associated with reliability and validity; but reliability and

validity are grounded in the quantitative paradigm and according to Merriam (1995) cannot be utilized in qualitative research. For qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that trustworthiness is an appropriate device for establishing methodological rigor. Trustworthiness supports inquiry findings in such a way that Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend make them "worth paying attention to" (p. 290). As the qualitative paradigm has evolved, trustworthiness has become a prominent standard for determining rigor. The trustworthiness of data for this study was evaluated according to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria of credibility, transferability, and reflexivity.

Credibility

In this study, credibility was enhanced because three forms of triangulation were utilized. Denzin (1979) described these forms as triangulation related to data, methods, and theory. First, data triangulation was accomplished through the utilization of multiple data sources, including interview transcripts, digital voice recordings, and teachers leaders' reflections. These data forms were analyzed to determine consistency of content and interpretation of meaning. Second, since this study applied the qualitative methodologies of narrative analysis and analysis of narrative, triangulation of methods was accomplished. Aspects of the development of urban teacher leaders were compared across each analysis, thus improving the credibility of the findings. The last form of triangulation, theory triangulation, was utilized as I applied multiple theoretical constructs to the interpretations of this research. Credibility was again enhanced because

of the triangulation of role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership and urban teacher leadership theories throughout the research process.

Transferability

Transferability results when qualitative findings can be transferred to other contexts or situations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The ability to transfer is presumed to be a responsibility of the research reader. For this to occur, the researcher must present the data in such a way, that thick, rich description (Geertz, 1973) creates for the reader a vision of context and an understanding of research assumptions. Enough contextual description is provided that the reader can determine the applicability of the findings to his or her own situations. Guba and Lincoln (1989) explain that when "salient conditions overlap and match" (p. 241) transferability can occur. Direct quotes from participants' interviews allowed me to share authentic details of participants' stories that included language choices, phrasing, tone, and important events to build a rich contextualized account of these teacher leaders' development as I retold their stories.

Reflexivity

The last means of determining trustworthiness for this study was reflexivity. As a former teacher leader, I forced myself to remain cognizant of the possibility that my own biases might be influencing the data collection and knowledge formation processes. To ensure respondents' views were kept in the forefront and that I engaged in as much neutrality as possible, I revisited data and recorded thoughts in my research journal after each interview and upon receipt of reflections. This process of attending to knowledge

construction is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) label as reflexivity. This is the final means of establishing trustworthiness utilized in this study.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methods of inquiry utilized in this study. The research was described as a qualitative multi-case study framed by the inquiry lenses of narrative analysis and analysis of narrative. Five urban teacher leaders were nominated and volunteered to participate in this study. The exploration of their development as professionals was examined through the theoretical constructs of role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, and urban teacher leadership.

A description of participants' profiles gave readers an overview of participants' teaching experience and personal characteristics. Participants' school environments were described to give readers an explanation of the urban contexts in which these participants worked. These descriptions of the urban context provided student, faculty and community information, allowing the reader to understand the challenges and resources that each teacher leader encountered.

Data collection and analysis was derived from a total of 21 co-constructed interviews and a number of teacher reflections. Once data were collected, analysis was conducted in the forms of narrative analysis and analysis of narrative. Each form of analysis added a deeper understanding of the journeys of these five participants and the range of experiences that contributed to their growth as teacher leaders. A collective examination of cases was concluded in a cross-case analysis that provided a listing of findings that bridged the individual cases. Finally, a discussion of methodological credibility brought closure to this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: NARRATIVE INQUIRY FINDINGS

> Teacher-leaders . . .are not only making learning possible for others but, in important ways, are learning a great deal themselves. Stepping out of the confines of the classroom forces these teacher-leaders to forge a new identity in the school, think differently about their colleagues, change their style of work in a school, and find new ways to organize staff participation. . . . It is an extremely complicated process, one that is intellectually challenging and exciting as well as stressful and problematic. (Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 1988, p. 164)

Introduction

The case studies presented in this chapter document the leadership development of five urban elementary teachers. The stories of Dorothy, Patty, Amy, Penny, and Joan contribute to answering this study's research questions: How do urban teacher leaders' experiences influence their leadership growth? How do urban teacher leaders think administrators influence their leadership development? How do urban teacher leaders perceive their roles in urban schools? How do urban teacher leaders contribute to the advancement of school goals?

In this chapter, the answers to these questions will be explored based on two analyses of the data of the study. A narrative for each participant will be presented followed by the report of a traditional qualitative analysis. Following Polkinghorne (1988), the stories in the first of each section were generated based on narrative analysis procedures, and the individual analyses were the outcomes of an analysis of narratives (see Chapter 3 for a complete description of data analysis procedure). Narrative analysis

was used to create stories that illuminate participants' perspectives on their professional journeys and choices with regard to teacher leadership. The analysis of narratives provides a systematic examination of salient points revealed in participant interviews. Themes, patterns and relationships are explored to more fully understand each participant's experiences.

In the following sections, five individual narratives and five analyses of participants' data are provided to reveal teacher leaders' perspectives and explore the motives for their actions. The use of these two approaches will provide a discussion of the development of urban teacher leadership. A chapter summary will conclude this segment of the study. The final chapter of this dissertation will synthesize the findings reported in this chapter and provide a discussion of implications and reflections.

Dorothy, The Helper

Narrative

Introduction. **"**I just wanted to save the world" were the words that hung in the air. Dorothy's deep level of care was evident as she related her journey of teacher leadership development. From the 1960's issues of integration and social reform to the present day challenges of desegregation and educational change, this commitment to being someone who would not only make a difference, but become a change agent in the world, has never left this 30-year veteran teacher. She held dear her responsibility to her students and their families. In her words, "The children deserve the best, and I've got to make sure I can do that every day."

When first approached, Dorothy was hesitant and unsure about her selection to participate in a teacher leadership study. She did not view herself as a teacher leader, but after some consideration, she agreed to participate.

> *I was very honored to even be thought of as one* [teacher leader] *and I think that my role is to support everyone else and be sure that everyone else has what they need or has the right answer to the question that they need in order for them to be successful. It's my job to sort of support everyone else.*

Interviews with Dorothy took place after school in the privacy of her classroom. Her classroom was a space where walls were framed with alphabet charts, number lines, and thematic posters of current units. First grade student work surrounded 20 individual desks, a teacher's table and a community space on the carpet. Each student's desk was neatly arranged in groups of four with Dorothy's table commanding a view of the students' workspace and the door that led to the world beyond. This was her domain, the sphere of learning that she created for her students. This was where the children came to learn, to be successful in their lives. Her passionate purpose was made evident in the space she created for her students.

> *I just love people. I love everybody and even if I don't know them, I love them. I think it's just the need to make a difference. It's not even a need to be recognized for making a difference. Like every child and every parent, every person is the child's parent. It's not just the child, it's the whole family. I just feel so responsible… I've always thought if I could just help somebody have a better life, if I could just make a difference for that child.*

Even though we had known each other over the course of five years, there was a nervousness generated by the formal interview process of this study. However, by the end of the first hour-long interview, Dorothy was more relaxed and open to the questions I posed. Subsequent interviews were easy-going, warm, and engaging. My role, as the

researcher, was that of an active listener, stopping now and then to clarify statements and to take notes for reflective material that would help develop new questions for ensuing interviews. Respecting the level of trust she had granted me, I followed pre-set guidelines, which included turning off the recorder at times and adhering to allotted timeframes. Her story was passionate, honest, and truly an emotional roller coaster ride of humility and pride in teaching, frustration with societal issues, love of learning, and hope for the future of her students and the urban community. At times laughter and tears of joy overlapped with expressions of hopelessness during the course of our interviews.

I have attempted to tell her story by weaving her own words into a narrative of her leadership journey. Her story offers a glimpse into critical aspects of her personal beliefs that provide a foundation for her educational philosophy and influence her evolving urban leadership skills. Dorothy's narrative was a testament to her commitment as a teacher.

Early development. Dorothy credited her father for molding her worldview and life priorities. When she spoke of him, her voice became lower with a special softness as she remembered the lessons he modeled that have had a life-long influence on her personal and professional practices. It is his philosophy of helping that she adopted.

> *My father taught me by example. He taught me to be honest, trustworthy, benevolent, generous, responsible and caring. He taught me to place others before myself. His entire life was spent taking care of others with his thoughts, words, deeds and money. He probably almost made a million dollars in his lifetime, but he gave it away to friends, relatives and charities trying to help everyone.*

Both of her parents graduated from high school and completed post-secondary training. Her mother graduated from business college and was certified to work as a

secretary, but became a homemaker. Her dad received his training as a radar bombardier in the Air Force. Dorothy spoke with pride of her parents' strong belief in education.

> *It was very important to him that we do have an education. He told me that the gifts that he would give me were things that could never be taken away…an education, love and family.*

Dorothy began her leadership journey early with the arrival of her middle sister, and three years later she welcomed her second sister. Dorothy recalled often being in charge of the younger girls.

> *I had two sisters. There's about 7 years difference between myself and my middle sister and there's 10 years difference between myself and my baby sister. We constantly played school among us. My teachers would give me the leftover papers and we would play school. And a lot of my discipline that I tried and used with children are just how I got along with my sisters. I had to make things seem to be their idea to get things done.*

Scouting and church activities were other forms of interactions with children outside her family that Dorothy enjoyed.

> *As a Girl Scout there were several badges that required that I go work at a daycare and provide, even as a junior girl scout and later as a senior scout. I would provide little coloring sheets like at the preschools or at the summer camps. Also, I helped in Sunday school. I was just a student helper in Sunday school.*

Mobility was a constant in Dorothy's life. Due to school rezoning, family mobility and later a husband in the military, Dorothy often found herself in new contexts. Dorothy attended a different school every year from first grade until her sophomore year in high school. During her three-year high school experience (in the same school), Dorothy encountered diversity through various classmates who attended her school. Although there were few African-American students in her high school, many Hispanic, Asian and German students, whose parents were in officer training school at the local

military base, provided her with a wider perspective on people and cultures. As part of her high school experience, Dorothy became a public branch exchange (PBX) telephone operator in the school office. This student job later translated into a full-time, paid PBX job at the local newspaper after graduating high school. These three life experiences honed her communication and interpersonal skills, equipping her to work with people from all walks of life and assisting her in overcoming shyness.

Dorothy contemplated her career choices. As she noted of her generation in the 1950's and 1960's, women were perceived to have limited choices in professional fields. Dorothy's family was very involved in her decision-making process of determining the career path she would follow.

> *I was raised at a time when the best choices for a married woman were a secretary, teacher, and possibly a nurse; but a nurse, they* [parents] *weren't real sure about nurses. I had three real choices. I could've gone into business and been a secretary at that time or teaching, which my family felt was a good choice because you could be with your own children during the summers. Because I was the oldest, they sorta talked against nursing which at one point was what I wanted to do. I had very conservative parents. Since they were not going to let me go all over the world and join the Peace Corps, I would just save the world one child at a time. And so I decided that teaching would be the way that I could make a difference. I think it was probably because of that era when we as young people thought that we were just going to change the whole world. I thought teachers would be the means by which the world could be changed. I decided that teaching was the right thing for me.*

Beginning professional. Dorothy completed the basic coursework at the local community college and then transferred to the nearby four-year university, where she graduated in 1965 with an endorsement to teach in grades K-12. That same summer she married and prepared for her first teaching assignment in a sixth grade classroom in a middle class school.

> *I expected to be with upper middle class or above in a very old community with old families who had lived in that area a very long time. Everything was perfect. I was ready to go, and the kids didn't show up. The classes did not make. They had to lose a classroom. So, being last in, I was first out, and so they assigned me to an inner-city school that was predominantly mill workers, cotton mill workers and their children which it turned out to be the best experience I could have.* [I] *was suddenly put into inner-city which was what I wanted because if I was going to save the world at that point, I needed to be where there was a world to save. I just felt like I was really into building a new world.*

During the course of her second year, Dorothy accompanied her husband in a military transfer to the western United States and learned the importance of collaboration.

> *During the time that I was there, there were more teachers leaving because they were mostly soldier wives as I was.*

Dorothy explained this was due to troop deployments to Vietnam and teachers returning to parent homes for support.

> *So I didn't get that mentoring there and I was very much out of my element. I think that is the only place that I can remember being scared professionally; that I really didn't have someone. So I think that was where I really realized you needed to have someone even just to sit and listen to you and listen to you figure out what to do.*

Dorothy's husband reentered civilian life the following year and Dorothy found herself in the midst of school desegregation in the deep South. Within this context, Dorothy's discipline practices were challenged and refined.

> *So the next year,'67, they were going to desegregate all schools. Both children and faculty, and it was going to be done last in, first out or volunteers. That was really a year* ['67-68], [I] *really did a lot of building of my discipline programs there because we had quite a few things going on. We had in my classroom one child that had been raped by the father of another one of my children. And then I had one child that would just get mad and leave school, and just do horrible things. And through learning how to deal with all of that, I got through that year.*

Dorothy reflected further on this experience.

> *There were three of us who were first year teachers there, two other girls who were just scared out of their minds. I don't know why. They wanted to stay at that school, and so I said, "Well, ok. I'll go." And so because I chose to go, I got to go to a new school called* [Major Elementary] *that had just been built on the fringe of the post. And it was a brand new school and I was placed in there as a fifth and sixth science teacher, but I would be team teaching with another teacher. We had 50 children in our class at a time and we taught all the science. And that's my first real contact in teaching with African Americans. There were African American teachers and there were non-African American teachers. And at first it was a little bit tense, but after a while things just sort of mellowed out.*

Dorothy continued to move from one school context to the next because of her husband's work demands. Her classroom experiences included teaching every grade, first through eighth, except fourth grade. "Growing where you are" and "Make your decision, then you make it the right decision" were adages that she would later share with new teachers who were unsure and nervous regarding their own abilities to be successful. These sayings exemplified her beliefs in personal empowerment and the ability to move forward in the most positive, productive way, regardless of the context.

> *I had this little saying, and I try to tell it to the interns and to other teachers, "You can do anything for…." It might be a year. It might be six months. It might be three weeks. It might be two weeks, but you can do anything for this amount of time.*

Maturing professional. Whether she worked in urban, suburban, or rural schools, Dorothy's confidence began to grow as she conquered difficult assignments and saw how children, regardless of background, were responsive to her approach to demonstrating respect and commitment to them.

> *But after those first few things* [moves]*, I found out that it really doesn't matter where you are, that children are children everywhere and you just do your best … and you'll be ok. I guess because I have moved around so*

> *much and it was so important to me to network with teachers already at the school because a lot of times I wasn't at a school very long. So I didn't have that time to wait and see how everything works. So I always would go and I would always find myself a mentor. Because back then you didn't have mentors, but there were always people willing to help and share. They meant a lot to me. And the people who help you can mean the difference between success and failure for yourself. But, I've always been one to find someone that can be my sounding board and can help me with any problems.*

Just as Dorothy began to gain confidence and develop strategies for integrating herself into new learning communities, a shift in her life took her away from education for eight years. Taking time to raise her children, Dorothy joined her husband in the newspaper business. As in the classroom, Dorothy worked hard to make this new career successful. As partial owner of several newspapers in small, local markets, Dorothy persevered to overcome shyness and build the business. Often she accepted written submissions and rewrote the articles to prepare them for publication. However, when Dorothy tried to negotiate a compromise between a disgruntled worker and her husband, she was fired. Dorothy had considered this an act of being helpful, whereas her husband found it intrusive. Dorothy laughed after she made this statement. Recalling her husband's irritation and her own belief that what she had done was with the best of intentions, this incident proved to be the impetus of her returning to the classroom.

Dorothy returned to the classroom once she finished the recertification process. Soon afterward, the newspaper business was sold and she completed her master's degree. It was at this point in time that her husband decided to attend graduate school. Dorothy wasn't sure about her husband's education choice; it would mean another distant move

away from her family. Little did she know that this move would be the most permanent in her life and in her career.

> *Most of my career has been very much moving from place to place. Maybe not moving from state to state, but moving from school to school. In fact, since I came here* [Smith Elementary School]*, in 1990, I've been at this school longer than I've been at any other school.*

Dorothy has spent the last 19 years at Smith Elementary school. Prior to coming to Smith, Dorothy had taught in the upper elementary grades. Since being employed in the current system, she was assigned to primary grade classrooms, where the majority of her teaching had been in first grade. In 1990, her first year teaching at Smith, the school system was in the midst of reorganizing due to a federal desegregation lawsuit that required teachers to be redistributed across the system in a racially balanced manner. Many White teachers who were assigned to her school, which had been previously been considered a Black school, were highly displeased of their new appointment. Some teachers refused the reassignment and retired. Others simply quit after only a short time in the new environment. Many of the teachers assumed Dorothy was one of the new transfers and would also be leaving shortly. She did not. She was simply a new hire in a very tumultuous time that reminded her of teaching in the late 1960s ,when she had volunteered to go to a newly integrated school. She recalled that the desegregation event, occurring 25 years earlier, was a smoother transition with less resistance from the teachers.

> *I mean it was a rough, rough year. I had been through a ratio transfer once before and I had volunteered for it; but the ones that didn't volunteer, it was just last in, first out, you know. And so you had people who were in the draw who didn't want to be here and you had people who stayed here and their friends were shipped out who didn't want other*

> *people here. Oh, and they* [transferred teachers] *were so broken-hearted. Some of those had been at those schools for 30 years and expected to retire there. A lot of the old timers that were transferred here put their purses on their arms and went home. A lot of people thought that I was part of the draw and that I didn't want to be here. It wasn't that they didn't like me because of my color, but they felt like people that came with the draw did not want to be here. But then I can understand the other end of it. The principals of the urban schools didn't want to end up with people who were just out of school, but it ended up that they did. I think over half, I would say three fifths of the faculty was new.*

How was she going to negotiate this highly charged atmosphere and survive? As in previous new positions, she slowly started to make acquaintances and approached people with openness and politeness. She began to make herself known to the office staff with simple morning greetings and smiles. She began seeking out teachers to have informal conversations and offering assistance when she saw a need; but primarily, she carefully observed and listened to others to learn how she could understand the changing culture of the school.

> *I've learned how to study fast on my feet and get the information I need and get the help I need from other people. And I think that has been something that has very much helped me. And if you can just stay focused on the children, what they need, then you can be successful wherever you are.*

Urban teacher leadership. Dorothy's teaching experience in urban schools spanned over 26 years. Her length of tenure made her an anomaly in the urban context. Dorothy began her teaching career at Smith Elementary School as a Title I lab teacher. She then taught second grade and ultimately, at the time of this study, she served as a first grade teacher. When asked how she was able to retain her optimism and enthusiasm, she responded with a big smile:

> *Because the children that come in the door have bright shiny faces and with each class you look around and you say, "Oh, this will be the class. This will be the class. Everyone will make it." And I say that each year and I think whatever class I had, when they come in that door, it's like a mystery what they are and you think about what they can become. And I think it's the children themselves because they want to learn and they want to be successful. Whichever class comes in that door is the one that keeps me going.*

Dorothy's enthusiasm and hope have sustained her commitment to teaching. In thinking back over her time in the urban context, Dorothy recalled stories of her children and how they were also teachers to her. Two particular students, Cedric and Chauntiqua, taught Dorothy the meaning of support and the importance of celebration.

Cedric, as Dorothy described him, was a "chubby little friend" who one day became so enraged with her that he destroyed classroom materials and became such a danger that his classmates were evacuated from the room. Dorothy related how her pride in classroom management was diminished and replaced with a new sense of humility because of this one child. As she tried a wide variety of management strategies, her frustrations with Cedric affected her teaching confidence and her emotional well-being. Although she was determined to win this child over, Dorothy realized she was not superwoman and she needed help. Dorothy learned that regardless of your level of expertise and commitment, children can continue to teach you and that accepting assistance is critical throughout your career. Dorothy realized it was not enough to just offer help to others, even if it is your greatest area of strength, she learned to accept assistance from others.

> *I had never met a child I couldn't mold or change into a perfect student until I met Cedric. I would cry from the time I left the building until I went home. Every morning I would cry from the time I left the house until I*

> *came to school. I thought I was superwoman. I could leap tall buildings and teach little tyrants. No child could withstand my wonderful teaching and discipline abilities till I met Cedric.*

Dorothy's frustration of her inability to gain compliance from Cedric was evident as she described him.

> *Cedric was a chubby little friend with a smile on his face and he looked like an angel until he got mad at me and proceeded to tear down every thing off of my shelves and it was all downhill from there. I did everything I had ever done with the worst of mine. I tried reward. I tried time out. I tried anything, but everything I tried was what I tried. He was horrible. He was devious. He was smart. He was manipulative. He was big. He was violent. He would push you. He would do just enough. I learned you had to say exactly what you wanted him to do, but I kept trying, I kept trying.*

Finally, one day due to the insistence of the school's special education teacher, Dorothy accepted the help that she had been resisting.

> *The special ed* [education] *teacher stepped in said, "*[Dorothy], *you can't handle this by yourself. You've done everything you know to do. You need help. You shouldn't have waited this long. You need help when it first starts." It went on until after Christmas. When it finally hit me that I was not Superwoman, I s-teamed him. And that is the first time that I ever failed to fix the problem.*

The pivotal point in dealing with Cedric came when Dorothy chose to accept assistance. From her level of despair and her realization that support from team members was imperative, Dorothy accepted assistance from other school staff members to work with Cedric, regain her confidence, and establish a calmer classroom.

> *It was an earth changing thing for me. Because up until that point, I could handle anything and, that's when, I really knew what support from team members meant. It was the first time that I had to ask for help. I won't ever be the same again. I think that's why I'm so eager to help other people because I just know that despair.* [Cedric] *taught me humility. I said, "God gave me* [Cedric] *to teach me character" …and I*

> *do believe that. I look at children and I see what I learned from 'em, and the worst children, I learned the most from.*

Another learning experience led Dorothy to recognize of the need to celebrate. Being able to celebrate the successful rise to adulthood was something that Dorothy had never experienced. In the entire history of her urban teaching career, Dorothy had not been revisited by a former student to share the successful outcome of his/her life.

> *Perhaps that's my fault that I didn't stay in touch to know some of my successes. I'm sure I have more of them out there, but this child came back and sought me out and is successful.*

Chauntiqua was the first and, by Dorothy's account, a powerful testament of personal perseverance that brought a great sense of accomplishment and validation to Dorothy. Dorothy was surprised at her own joy and excitement in knowing she had contributed to assisting this young woman in her life journey. Chauntiqua was living proof of Dorothy's purpose in teaching.

Chauntiqua was a child raised by drug addicts who was fed from garbage cans and would not eat food at school. When she walked into Dorothy's classroom to visit, Dorothy was shocked and almost moved to tears. Dorothy visited with the young woman to learn of her marriage, family, job and new home. Knowing somehow she had made a difference in this young woman's life, Dorothy reflected on this revelation.

> *I had something really strange happen to me the other day. One of my first graders, my first year as a first grade teacher here, walked into my room and I recognized her and I almost lost control of my emotions and started crying. Because that was the first time I think that I had seen a success. And I didn't realize how happy it was to see a success. She was a child that wouldn't eat food at school because her mom and stepfather were drug addicts. They didn't have jobs and they would go around to the restaurants and get the food out of the garbage cans and that's what they ate. And the little girl was so afraid about eating food because she had*

> *seen her father and mother get the food out of the garbage cans that she would not eat anything anywhere else. Because it was truly my first success that I guess in all the years I've taught that's come back to me now. And I have actually seen that she's doing well. She has the most gorgeous little kid. Her husband is working. She is working. They have bought a house. Yea, and that is the one. That is the one. If I don't have anyone else come, I can say she made it. And that's what I wish for all of my children. It's not that they be rich, and it's not that they be doctors, but that they just have a good life.*

These lessons have empowered and humbled Dorothy. The challenges of children's lives have created opportunities for Dorothy's professional growth. Through these lessons, she reflected upon implications for herself as well as the needs of other urban teachers. Dorothy's analysis led her to conclude that urban teachers need to remain open to support throughout their careers and that there is a need to track student successes to promote urban teacher sustainability.

> *Then I got to thinking, there has to be for those of us in teaching for along time, there has to be a way, especially in the inner city that we see and know about the kids that do succeed.*

In learning more about student successes in the urban context, Dorothy viewed the local media as a hindrance rather than a support in making student accomplishments known. Dorothy believed that the local media had created a negative perception of urban schools. She criticized the news sources for reporting generalizations, misconceptions and biases that represented a negatively skewed view of urban neighborhoods and families. Noting an imbalance of the news shared, Dorothy believed that an urban reporter should be assigned to gather and report a more balanced perspective on events in the inner-city community.

> *If they've got to report the bad stuff, ok, but you've got to find something good to report, too. Because you're labeling whole groups of people and*

> *that does harm I think. I really get upset about that sometimes, because the only thing, very rarely is that good news shared that a lot of other schools get routinely. I've said all along that somebody ought to be just covering the urban areas and getting that good out there. I don't believe people do think* [of] *all the wonderful things that are going on here.*

Typical of Dorothy's positive outlook, she gave examples of the good she found in the urban context. Aside from schools, churches have historically garnered esteem and provided a source of support to community members. Relating programs for those in need, Dorothy offered her positive perspective of the urban community to make her point.

> *We've got churches in this community that are doing wonderful, wonderful things that I would put up against any church anywhere else. They've got tutoring programs going on. They've got financial assistance programs going on. They've got new to work programs going on where you can go in* [and] *get an outfit for your interview. We just don't hear a lot of that and I don't know if it's because people don't know how to get that information out there to the newspaper or whether that's not what the newspaper is looking for. It's not all bad over here. And I think it would make our community feel better too.*

Becoming a teacher leader. Dorothy could not recall any significant events or a turning point that led her to stepping outside her classroom duties to assume leadership responsibilities. Struggling to view herself as a leader, Dorothy related plausible reasons why others see her in this role.

> *I find it very hard to look at myself as a leader. I have never tried to be a leader. I did not consciously make the decision to be considered a leader. It was very much a surprise when I found that others consider me a leader. Perhaps the reason they think I am a leader is because I will take the time to help. If I could not help, then I could listen, offer suggestions or find others that could help. I'm a good listener. And I think that I'm sort of a motherly figure, and so it's easy for people to come and talk to me.*

Dorothy modeled a willingness to connect with families by expanding her role in students' lives. As an active participant in community events, her ability to build relationships with parents and students was evidence of Dorothy's desire to understand and connect with the urban community and the families she served.

> *But I think wherever you go, the culture, whether it's urban, rural or mountain* [schools]*, you've got to become a part of that community. I've gone to church functions, yard sales and all sorts of things just to be in their community because I think it makes us all feel part of it. What better way to know the people, get along with the people than be seen at the shopping places, and the things that you do with the neighbors? I think that's very important, just being seen as part of the community. They expect me to be there.*

Through Dorothy's outreach efforts, teachers who may have been hesitant of their participation in the community have been reassured by her example and the reception that families have demonstrated. As a result, school and community relations have been strengthened.

Seeking professional development to further bolster herself in addressing the needs of her students and their learning has become a routine part of Dorothy's own growth.

> *I do believe teachers, urban teachers, could keep going to school. I think we need it because I think as they find things that make our work more effective that we all need to try to do it. I love to go to school myself and I guess I am considered a professional student. I love to read and try new educational techniques; assessments and I love educational history. How far have we come and where are we going? I guess I can even be considered a futurist.*

Dorothy was comfortable with the label *professional student*. She believes her personal initiative to keep learning and stay informed contributed to her confidence in sharing with others. As the team leader, she felt it was her responsibility to have a strong knowledge

base of current information and research to share with others. She confirmed this by stating, "I think that any teacher leader needs support to know what to do."

Being informed also led her to find her voice as a teacher advocate. Although she was not comfortable speaking to large groups of adults, her interactions with small groups have proven effective as she mediated several types of student, parent and personnel issues.

> *I learned a long time ago that the loneliest feeling in the world comes during a conflict with administration or parents. Because of my past experiences, I volunteer to go as team leader with members of our team or anyone else in the building to antagonistic meetings with parents and administration. I will also contact our local professional organizations if I feel that their help is needed. My main purpose is to provide support, to protect our team members, and to protect our students. While I do not do this often, this year I have participated in a disciplinary hearing for a fourth grade student, several conferences between teachers and irate parents, two conferences with parents for special placement (PAC, Solutions), and several informal conversations with principals or supervisors concerning personnel issues. I have made phone calls and written recommendations. I have prodded the professional organization to keep members on professional leave informed.*

Moving into a formal role as a school leader, Dorothy described her evolution as a gradual process that was influenced by her involvement as a mentor, first grade team member, and as a grade-level leader.

> *I had never really done something officially. I've always been the support person in the background. I'm the gopher usually* (laughter)*. And there's quite a bit of difference between being the gopher and being the one that the questions are asked. So, I have to be sure I know what's going on so I can tell the others.*

Her two-year tenure as team leader allowed her to practice some strategies that motivated and empowered team members. Dorothy worked to create opportunities for discussions and reflections on issues. Decisions were made collectively rather than individually.

Upon completion of the decision-making process, Dorothy followed up with praise for all task participants. Dorothy ensured that all team members took on various leadership roles that contributed to their overall efforts.

> *I'm leader in name only because all of the duties that would go with being a team leader. I have other people within my team, everybody does some part of it. So, the only part of being team leader that I am is when they have the leadership meetings. I have those. Everybody else has some other duty, but we just all coordinate together. You just give them an opportunity to do what they would like to do. I always try to get their thoughts first. Let them make the decisions and then praise them for what they've done. Because I found out right away lest they've got some ownership in it, it's hard to convince 'em.*

Dorothy's leadership style was molded by her own observations of former and current administrators. She observed the responses of her fellow teachers and came to believe that an authoritarian leadership model was the least effective method. By acting as a gatherer and dispenser of information and a coordinator of events, Dorothy collaborated to maintain a synergy of productivity among her team members.

> *I never lead and say this is what we're going to do. I do know I have had some leaders that are that way. Getting everyone else to come on and be a leader of a small thing. Then we work together as a team. You just have to be a good communicator and someone that people will trust. Maybe a coach? Is that what I am a coach? I think I'm more of a coach than a leader. Maybe that's what I am.*

Dorothy's role as a coach included motivating and encouraging her team to work together. As a coach, Dorothy worked to build a supportive team culture in which everyone contributed. Dorothy viewed her grade-level team as a chain with each person representing a link. In essence, the actions of one link depended upon the actions of others. Dorothy perceived her role as one who acts to assist with directing and counseling to keep the team connected and moving forward.

> *Our staff represents a chain for success. Each of us represents a link in the chain. Our success as a team is only as successful as each individual link. So, we've learned that by yourself is scary, but when you're all working together that you all can become stronger and I don't mean militant, but I just mean it's easier to do what you're supposed to do when you're all together like that. I try to encourage the team to work together, not to withdraw into each of our classrooms and exist only as a teacher in that room.*

With the encouragement of peers, Dorothy gained confidence in her leadership skills, completing an advanced degree and earning an administrative endorsement. During the course of her degree attainment, Dorothy gained a deeper perspective on the formal roles of school administration through various course assignments. This experience enhanced her collaborative relationship with her building administration.

> [The administrators] *have greatly supported me, especially when I was working on my EDS in Administration and Supervision. They answered my questions, allowed me to shadow them, and allowed me the time to discuss school problems with them. Both have an open door policy and they are never too busy to stop and talk for a moment. They keep me informed and allow me to be a liaison between our team and the front office. Very rarely do we receive any mandates from the front office. They allow us to handle these as we feel we should.*

Dorothy believed administrators and teachers should have open communication and each should try to understand the others' perspective. Being proactive to address issues before situations deteriorate and seeking input from administrative and non-administrative personnel are two key strategies which enhance relationships between teachers and administrators. Dorothy also believed that being assertive and direct are additional assets.

> *I'm not afraid to go ask a question of administration. And I've taught long enough that I've often been in a position of liaison between the teaching staff and the administration. And I think that that's one thing that you've got to understand both sides and where both sides are coming from,*

> *especially when you know there might be some sort of problem that arises or a teacher might feel that perhaps someone is upset with them. And I'm a good one to just go on and talk and find out what's going on.*

After attaining her degree, Dorothy realized that her true calling was in the classroom teaching her students and helping her fellow teachers. When questioned about why she chose to stay in the classroom, her opinion was very clear.

> *I always pictured myself as being an assistant principal somewhere. By now, I do not want that because I don't want to deal with personnel issues (laughter). I just want to be in charge of my own little classroom.*

Dorothy's decision to remain in the role of a classroom teacher required a balance in fulfilling instructional and administrative responsibilities. However, it was her role as a teacher that came first. Dorothy believed her administrative tasks were important, but her ultimate responsibility was with her students and their needs.

> *And I tell myself constantly, I am a teacher and my job is to teach. My main job is these kids and their education. If I'm teaching them, they're going to make those gains whether I do all this other stuff. Your job is the teaching and your job will be judged by what is the assessment at the end. Not so much about how many committees you volunteer on. Now I do believe that it is an important part and I do my best. But if I can't do my very best one time, I'm not gonna beat myself up as long as I'm doing my job here* [in the classroom].

Dorothy relayed her desire to remain in the role of a classroom teacher who acted as a leader when called upon. In preparing for the next school year, Dorothy explained her summer routine of reflection. She smiled calmly and answered with a wistful tone:

> *I spend a lot of time by myself thinking. During the summer, if I'm not here at school, I'm at home by myself, carless, by choice. I think that quiet time I spend thinking about what I'm going to do next and how I'm gonna handle that. Like this summer, my whole mind will be thinking about school because I'll be thinking about coming back.*

Conclusion. Dorothy's story was one of perseverance, resilience, cooperation, openness to change, and determination to assist others in becoming the best they can be. Her passion for her students and their families was evident as she has contemplated their challenges and the means to help them have a better life. These characteristics have contributed to her successes in stepping into a larger helping role.

Dorothy believed it was her role as a teacher leader to support everyone else. Her sense of responsibility was extended to everyone in her work environment. Dorothy's strong ties with the community have inspired other teachers to build relationships that further enhance school and community relations. Her ability to create a domino effect of influence has contributed positively to Smith Elementary School's overall climate and standing in the community.

Although she has fallen short of her original intent of saving the world, Dorothy has succeeded in helping others have better lives. Dorothy stated, "The children deserve the best, and I've got to make sure I can do that every day." I believe she has and continues do so for everyone around her.

Case Analysis

Introduction. Following Hatch's (2002, p. 153) *Steps in Typological Analysis,* I revisited the original data from interviews, reflections and digital recordings to identify themes, patterns and relationships. I started with typologies from the theoretical lenses of my study: role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership and urban teacher leadership. After repeatedly revisiting the data by rereading and listening to the audio recordings, I identified prevalent themes and prioritized these in rank order as they were

associated with each theoretical lens (see Chapter 3 for details of this process). As the typological analysis was completed, salient components of the data emerged and were identified as dominant elements to be discussed in the analysis. This process was repeated for each participant.

The use of typologies in this analysis of narrative provided a systematic process to identify pertinent themes and interconnections from each participant's story. Using the categories for analysis identified by Hatch (2002), themes, patterns and relationships were analyzed to generate statements. The statements that represented themes in the data were used as headings to organize the exposition that follows. All participant analyses are organized in this fashion.

Analysis of Dorothy's interviews indicated that her need to help and her belief in learning were the central themes that emerged from her data. Other themes of teamwork, building relationships with various learning community members, and a strong self-efficacy were identified and are discussed in the following sections. An analysis of data not only provided a comparative perspective against the existing literature from the field, but also pointed toward the implications of Dorothy's choices related to her roles as a teacher and a leader.

Role identity. Within Dorothy's schema of role identities, she identified two of her most prominent professional roles as that of a helper and a learner. Dorothy recognized that if she was to fulfill her need to help, she must be able to learn. And in learning, she believed she has a responsibility to help others learn. Dorothy rationalized that helping and learning are interdependent. Additional themes such as teambuilding,

building relationships, strong self-efficacy, and community connections were also identified as elements that characterize Dorothy's experiences as a teacher leader.

Dorothy was a helper. The most dominant theme throughout the data was Dorothy's perception of herself as a helper. Stryker (1980) suggests that frequency of roles is an indication of salience for individuals. Dorothy's professional roles of teacher and teacher leader provided opportunities for her to practice tasks associated with being a helper. Commenting on her roles, Dorothy described facets of her helping responsibilities and her support to fellow professionals.

> *I have considered myself a helper, advocate, coach, sounding board, facilitator, and a friend to everyone on my team. I have tried to help everyone with any problems both professionally and personally. And lots of times I think it's easy for people to ask help from me.*

The importance individuals attach to their identities determines the amount of effort and how well they enact a role (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Stryker, 1968); this is recognized as their measure of commitment. From Dorothy's descriptions of her helping roles, her level of commitment appeared strong. Dorothy's commitment to her role as a helper was strengthened by her confidence in her abilities to assist others, regardless of the difficulty. Sharing that her outreach to others created a positive domino effect, Dorothy believed that a connection existed between assisting co-workers and improving the quality of learning for students. Dorothy maintained that if she was able to support fellow teachers, then students should benefit by their teachers' improved performance.

> *By helping teachers be successful, I'm actually helping the children too. I love to help people become the best they can be. I love to know that I can help other people and I can help them with any problem they have*.

In reviewing Dorothy's complete data set, there was no defining moment when helping was suddenly incorporated into her set of behaviors. Rather, helping has been a lifelong practice as evidenced by her babysitting her sisters, assisting in Sunday school, facilitating Girl Scout activities, and volunteering during high school. Also, there appeared to be little evidence of any incongruence of this role in Dorothy's life. Aside from minor issues, data suggested that Dorothy was not challenged in her role as a helper. Since Dorothy had not experienced role conflict (Burke, 2006), her continued success in her role as a helper enabled her to gain confidence as her professional skills grew. As a result, Dorothy's self-efficacy was strengthened to such a level that she was confident in her ability to broaden her scope of helping to others beyond the classroom.

Dorothy was a learner. Dorothy believed that becoming informed was a way to help others. Dorothy's professional learning capacity was driven by the purpose of helping others.

> *If I could go back to school every other year, I think I would. Because I do so much reading both online and off and because I love to take classes and workshops, I can often help my friends with evaluations, lessons, and professional writing. I want our team to know everything I know and I believe that this knowledge makes us better supporters of change.*

Dorothy believed her role as a learner was inclusive of her ability to listen to and communicate with various individuals. Dorothy viewed herself as a liaison between administrators, teachers and parents. Her ability to listen and translate meanings between stakeholders was an example of her commitment to understanding and negotiating solutions for each member.

> *My own personal confidence is influenced by understanding more of the principal and what she expects, and being able to relate that back.*

Sometimes you just have to be a good listener and let the people tell you to get a point of view across or they want you to go and relate the message.

Dorothy's ability to communicate and to act as a liaison between administrators, teachers, students and parents demonstrated her ability to take on various perspectives, while acting as a mediator. Her ability to take on these various roles enabled her to negotiate and communicate in a productive manner. Mead (1934), Stryker (1962), and Schwalbe (1988) contend that the ability to understand various roles (i.e., role-taking) allows individuals such as Dorothy to imagine and empathize with other people's thoughts, emotions, and actions. Role-taking is the understanding of other people's roles of actions; whereas, role-making allows individuals to enact these understandings to take on new roles (Hewitt, 2007). Dorothy demonstrated both of these abilities as they pertained to her communicative and collaborative abilities. She demonstrated understanding of the roles of others (role-taking) as a liaison and mediator, and she chose to operate from different roles (role-making) to work as a grade-level chair and school leader.

Distributed leadership. ***Teamwork is a way to build a culture of helping.***

Dorothy consistently shared her thoughts and perceptions about the power of teamwork. As a continuation of Dorothy's practice of helping, she recently accepted the task of serving as a team leader. Dorothy made it very clear that she sees herself as a coach rather than a leader. From Dorothy's statements, it was evident that her view of leadership was that it should be enacted through offering assistance and encouragement, rather than by demanding performance and compliance. Dorothy believed that participation from all group members was critical to the team's productivity. In her

words, "I think I'm a coach (Laughter), but I don't ever make them sit on the bench." (Laughter).

Having experienced a previous team leader who successfully implemented and modeled a distributed leadership style, Dorothy's insight into the inner workings of her team led her to conclude that this collaborative style of leadership was most productive for this particular group of educators. Using the technique of encouraging, Dorothy discussed one way she coaches team members to participate. Dorothy believed that participation builds ownership and where ownership of work exists for each team member, then care and support can be generated to optimize the quality of work.

> *It's one way to get 'em to buy into it. So the way you do it is, you sort a say now so and so… and this will go great… and you're so good at this… so I want you to… and the next thing you know, she's off. (Laughter).*

From Dorothy's perspective, she was a coach; but data revealed that she was also a cheerleader. Due to Dorothy's insight into her team members' needs and work habits, she sustained a collaborative mode of operation. For both the team and Dorothy, this collaborative style of leadership worked. Through this leadership role, Dorothy established a platform to promote her core belief of helping through promoting various opportunities that allowed team members to be engaged in a democratic fashion.

> *We delegated stuff and so the main thing I was in charge of was* [accreditation] *and the leadership meetings and all field trips and they* [grade-level team members] *took everything else. Everybody had a duty and they volunteered for it.*

In discussing her grade-level team, Dorothy's commitment to the team members and the trust generated by the relationships established were evident. Dorothy's description of everyone taking responsibility for teaching and supporting the students was

a perspective by which teacher power and personal ego were replaced with a high level of confidence and an authentic child-centered focus that worked for the common good of everyone.

> *I really can't tell you how our team culture developed, but every one of us will do "anything" for each other. The first grade view of teaching together is we all help each other in any way. We focus on our students and we do whatever it takes to assist their learning. If there is a dispute with the parent of someone else on that team and that teacher has had someone else from that family and can assist… it just really works.*

Dorothy's description of shared leadership related to her grade-level team exemplified the leadership work that Gronn (2003), Harris and Muijs (2005), and Spillane and Diamond (2007) describe as authentic to the needs of contexts, individuals, and school cultures. Distinguished by the established relationships of her grade-level team, Dorothy and her co-workers gained a deep sense of each others' strengths and talents over the course of time and have learned to use each other's abilities to benefit their team. Gronn (2003) classifies this specific form of distributive leadership as *intuitive working relations*.

Anticipating the needs of others is a way to build relationships. Dorothy's ability to look ahead and anticipate the needs of others was a means by which she was able to form new relationships. By first looking ahead to read situations and to gain a sense of need, Dorothy's proactiveness led her to anticipate how she can step in to assist and to provide time and communication to improve the quality of her school environment.

> *Most of what I do as my own personal self and what I try to share with others that I work with, go ahead and look ahead. Don't just be looking right now. Look ahead and see how people, parents, the administration, your principals are going to react to what you're doing and by getting the teachers to look ahead.*

Dorothy believed that everyone has the power to effect change in a school environment and to transform the school culture. Dorothy's belief in her own power to influence others, her self-efficacy, was well demonstrated. By being proactive and stepping in to assist teachers, Dorothy ingratiated herself to others by relieving teachers of misbehaving students. Dorothy shared that by taking the initiative to remove a child from a tense situation she gave the teacher relief and generated a change of context for the student. Seen as a win-win situation, Dorothy also earned appreciation from the teacher and gratification in her own ability to help. From such situations, communication was generated and relationships began to form.

> *One thing that I have found that you can do is start slow and you yourself can change the culture. And the first thing you do is when you spot a teacher was pretty much in my situation like* [the student with severe behavior], *you offer for that child to come to your room and just sit for a while. And don't send the child back until the teacher comes and gets 'em. Just maybe once or twice. And that begins the* [process]. *They're so relieved that they'll reciprocate. They'll realize what that means to them. And pretty soon you'll see that help coming along.*

Dorothy believed this process generated reciprocation, which led to other opportunities for interaction. Over a period of time, this practice began to build a helping culture, where identification and attention to the needs of others was a commonplace occurrence. The data revealed that Dorothy operated out of a natural willingness to step outside her own responsibilities to help others. However, not all teachers have the aptitude or inclination to look beyond their own needs. Once again, Dorothy's ability to step outside her own perspective demonstrated her role-taking (Mead, (1934; Stryker, 1962; & Schwalbe, 1984) capacity. Her skill of role-taking enabled Dorothy to work

from a collective stance to anticipate peer needs. Data indicated she was able to establish relationships and create networks because of her love of people and her realization that strength in numbers could resolve workload issues.

Change is prompted by a need to learn and evolve. Although Dorothy's educational experience was impacted annually by transitions to new schools throughout her elementary grade years, Dorothy's perception of learning was not diminished by the high mobility she experienced as a child. Once again, no single incident can be attributed to Dorothy's identification as a learner. Instead, Dorothy's role as a learner was signified by her ability to situate herself in her new educational context each year. A parallel can be drawn between Dorothy's childhood education and her professional life; in both, she adapted to change and found new ways to navigate her new school contexts. In childhood, her teachers were her formal mentors. As an educator, Dorothy sought out someone to informally mentor her to give her insight into the expectations and history of her new teaching assignments.

> *I did not have that confidence when I first started and having moved around so much I think a lot of what I know as a teacher supporter or teacher leader, comes from how I had to gain that confidence through moving around quite a bit. So I guess that having to go in and find a spot for myself and I can put myself in anybody's place, you know, the class that is incorrigible, I've been there and I got help.*

Dorothy believed that "anyone who is going to teach for any long time, is going to be a first year teacher many times." Since Smith Elementary School was her longest professional placement (19 years), Dorothy was able to observe shifts in formal leadership roles. Her perception of changes in personnel led me to conclude that Dorothy believed learning was experienced as each individual worked to understand the

expectations and roles that come with change. As Dorothy learned to adjust to leaders' styles, she also grew in her understanding of the shifting dynamics of personnel within the organization.

> *When someone new comes in, it's just like moving to a new school. It becomes a new school culture. So everyone in the building became a first year teacher again. When both sides are first year like that, it takes a lot of understanding and a lot of team building on both sides. We learned more how she would perceive us, then, we began to gain more confidence.*

Dorothy's learning processes are driven by her intent to assist others. Her awareness of how she impacted others reflected Dorothy's unselfish nature. Her care for others was demonstrated by her consideration of others' needs and in her willingness to share her time, advice, and practices. Dorothy's care of others drives her willingness to help and provide assistance in the learning processes.

Teacher leadership. ***Strong self-efficacy prompts initiative.*** From early in our discussions, Dorothy indicated a strong belief in the transforming power of teachers. Her statement, "I thought teachers would be the means by which the world could be changed," was evidence of her belief that teaching has a transformative quality. Through Dorothy's belief in her own abilities, she had the confidence to work in many contexts with a variety of professionals. Dorothy practiced self-coaching by using key adages that encourage, motivate, and remind her of her purpose in teaching. This self-coaching prompted Dorothy to reflect and to keep a positive outlook on her professional abilities and those of her fellow teachers.

> *I think the main thing is a teacher leader has to love teaching so much that everything that comes out of her mouth has to be positive and hopeful.*

A definition of teacher leadership that best exemplified Dorothy came from Lambert's (2003) work. Lambert states, "Those who have managed to keep their sense of purpose alive and well are reflective, inquisitive, focused on improving their craft, action oriented; they accept responsibility for student learning and have a strong sense of self" (p. 422). Dorothy maintained a strong sense of self as she has persevered in her instructional responsibilities over the course of her career. Her practice of reflection aided in maintaining her sense of purpose as she continued to evolve as an educator. And, as validated by the research of Goode, Quartz, Barrazza-Lyons, and Thomas (2004), Dorothy's ability to sustain as an urban teacher was promoted by her enjoyment of her work, interest in content knowledge and a desire to make a difference in students' lives.

A teacher leader will take the time to help others. Dorothy's role as a helper required her to step outside her contracted teaching role to assist others. Dorothy's conviction that her role as a leader was tied to her ability to help others often came in conflict with the demands of time and her other responsibilities. Convinced that a core responsibility as a teacher leader was to communicate, Dorothy attributed many of the mistakes made in schools to ineffective communication.

> *It's the teacher leaders job to be sure that what she knows, everyone knows because most of the mistakes that are made are just because somebody doesn't know. So, I see myself as being someone who takes the information from the principal and gets it to our team.*
>
> *I try to be sure that they know all of the information and so I might send it to them in an email and or make a little newsletter or put it on our teacher board, right outside my classroom. Or if it's something that we all need to work on or do together, I make sure that everyone knows it.*

Teacher leadership responsibilities cannot detract from the priority of teaching.

Dorothy also believed that teacher leaders should be protective of their time in order to focus upon teaching. Balancing the need of helping others, while refraining from accepting too many responsibilities that could impair the quality of her teaching, Dorothy had a well-defined focus on her students as her first and foremost priority. Like the participants of Troen and Boles (1994) study, who saw teaching as their first responsibility and leadership activities as secondary, Dorothy also viewed her instructional practice as the most important of all her tasks. Dorothy even suggested that rather than infringing on instructional time, teachers should make the effort to use personal time to accomplish leadership tasks.

> *Because if you try to do everything that they* [fellow educators] *want you to do, there's not enough time in the day, week, month or year. It is impossible. It* [urban context] *is a tough place to teach. You are just so responsible for so much. And more and more things are added to your plate. You do what you can and you may have to work at home or on weekends. When you're here with the kids, your focus is on the child and what they need.*

Balancing these viewpoints, Dorothy sought to work for the improvement of her school while maintaining instructional integrity. She has done this by not allowing teacher leader activities to interfere with the quality of instruction for her students. Dorothy's pragmatic nature enabled her to address issues efficiently and to prioritize her activities. Dorothy's desire to communicate clearly was evidence of her belief in minimizing mistakes. The reduction of mistakes enhanced communication and decreased time needed for correcting errors. Dorothy's ability to regulate these leadership activities was clear in the data.

Urban Teacher Leadership. ***Community connections are important to home-school relationships.*** Cited as the single-most important factor in working in the urban context, Dorothy related her belief in the importance of becoming an active member of the local community. Dorothy believed, despite differences in race or culture, that she had a responsibility to form relationships with parents and children in order to get to know them on a more personal level. The purpose for forming relationships outside the school context was to improve parent-teacher partnerships in support of student learning. Delpit (1997), Hilliard (1991), Ladson-Billings (2001), and Moses and Cobb (2001) contend that in addition to being effective in the classroom, teachers' leadership skills can be enhanced by partnering with parents. Dorothy's strategy of engaging parents and community members in the learning process strengthened her ability to communicate with others and better meet student learning needs. By reaching out to parents for the benefit of students, Dorothy also enacted her role as a leader beyond the classroom. Although Dorothy does not live within the community, she actively participated in garage sales, shopped in local markets, and attended celebrations of life and death, which she believed are important to her role as a teacher.

> *You have to know your children. You have to know the community. You have to know the culture and how within that culture their beliefs about themselves and the family's belief about their place in the community. And also what the family feels about the future of that child. What do they want for that child? At first, several of us* [teachers] *would go together, but I have gone on my own now.* [If] *you get invited to a wedding, go to the wedding. If there's a reason to go to the funeral, go to the funeral. It makes you a part of their community, part of their culture. What better way to truly know how the culture works?*

Dorothy perceived these relationships to be invaluable to support students in their learning. Dorothy's comfort level in negotiating the various contexts was once again evident as she explained her experiences within the community. Dorothy also described her interpretation of the community's reaction to her attendance and participation in non-school related activities.

> *Because in the urban culture, whatever the ethnicity is, I think they value and honor teachers --- if the teacher is willing to make that connection with them.*

Dorothy's role in the larger community corresponded to her role in the grade-level team. Promoting a sense of community through a family model, Dorothy explained how each teacher within the first grade took responsibility for each child, whether the child was in that teacher's classroom or not. From this practice, Dorothy concluded that a united front is critical to students in the urban context.

> *We're all here to work together. And I think that's very important in the urban community for the children to see that any teacher here is your teacher.*

Negative community perspectives are a result of biased media coverage. As a former newspaper owner and journalist, Dorothy understood the power of the media. In reading and analyzing how urban communities and schools are portrayed, Dorothy faulted the media as contributing to the negative perceptions of the urban context. Dorothy believed that this negative portrayal by the media has biased the community at large to such a point that even school personnel are influenced. Adding the challenge of negative media reporting to other challenges unique to the urban context, Dorothy felt a sense of frustration.

> *I don't understand some of the things they* [school personnel] *say to the newspaper about urban teachers. Just because we want to be here, we're considered bad teachers, you know? I don't understand some of that. So I think that's a major challenge. There are really no cheerleaders for urban teachers right now…except maybe you and maybe* [the local university].

The negativity perceived by Dorothy was not only an affront to her role as an urban teacher, but also to her core belief in the importance of remaining positive. Throughout the data, Dorothy spoke of remaining positive, focusing on the good, and being hopeful. From the data, it can be inferred that Dorothy believed that positive climates lead to positive outcomes. If negative reporting in the media can be reduced, then urban schools and communities have a greater opportunity to be viewed in a more positive light, thus producing climates for greater productivity and improved life chances for the students that urban schools serve.

Conclusion. Dorothy's passion for helping and her commitment to learning provided the drive that has sustained her over a lengthy career and that makes her an anomaly in the urban context. Dorothy's role as a helper and a learner were clearly suggested throughout the data. How she managed to negotiate these roles and attain the status of teacher leader was evident. Through her efforts to help others, she gained appreciation and generated trust among her peers. Using her powers of observation and listening, she learned to analyze contexts and determine individual and group needs. Dorothy's role identity prompted her to act in altruistic ways to benefit both co-workers and students alike.

Dorothy's confidence in distributed leadership was a testament to her belief in the abilities of her peers. Knowing each of her team members, Dorothy's insight gave her an

advantage in how to best approach other teachers to maximize their individual performance, which in turn, contributed to their team effectiveness. Understanding that it takes all team members to work toward a common goal, Dorothy had a genuine desire for each person to feel successful. For success to occur, Dorothy's expectation of 100% participation from all team individuals was necessary.

Dorothy's role as a teacher leader has been influenced by her context. As an urban teacher, Dorothy embraced her involvement in the community and established relationships with families and students. Her belief in knowing her students in order to meet their needs was a critical part of how she interacted and held her students accountable for learning. Dorothy also understood that beyond the internal challenges of the urban context, she and her fellow educators should also work to reduce negative perceptions created by the media.

As a leader, Dorothy enjoyed stepping outside her classroom domain to assist others, yet she was careful to maintain a boundary in order to protect her instructional time with students. Because of Dorothy's child-centered approach, she sustained her joy in teaching, while working to be of service to other teachers and their students. Dorothy's efforts to provide support to her peers were examples of her willingness to learn while supporting her core belief of helping.

Without Dorothy's sense of helping and care, she would not have become the leader she was at the time of this interview. Guided by this sense of responsibility, Dorothy cautiously stepped into the arena of leadership. Content with her tenure as a leader on a grade-level team, Dorothy's aspirations for leadership were satisfied. Her

willingness to lead and assist others was only bounded by time and the number of people she was able to assist. Leadership for Dorothy did not exist as an ambition for career advancement, but as a form of assistance to promote personal empowerment and student success. Dorothy's role as a leader was not the focus of her work, but a means to accomplish her professional goals, which were tied to a personal level of care.

Patty, The Collaborator

Narrative

Introduction. Who would have thought that Patty would return after that first year of teaching? The quiet, shy young woman had never experienced anything like this in her life. Having grown up in a small town, she had challenged herself to step outside her world to make her dream of teaching a reality. However, in her first year of teaching, she struggled daily with classroom management and had difficulty meeting the needs of her students. Often, other teachers assisted her by relieving her of disruptive children or offering suggestions on instructional strategies. This had been a year filled with challenges that led her to question her ability to teach. She made up her mind that the next year would be different. She would be in charge. She would set the tone of respect, and she would make sure that she reached out to new teachers who would need support as she had.

Patty was completing her sixth year of teaching at Smith Elementary School when she was nominated to participate in this study. Patty was open to and enthusiastic about this opportunity. Our interviews took place in her classroom during the planning time embedded in her school day. Since Smith Elementary School was a large, crowded campus, meeting in her room ensured privacy, space and helped us adhere to our

interview timeframe. Patty's responses were often interjected with nervous laughter and sometimes interrupted due to various school responsibilities. Accepting her status as a teacher leader, Patty spoke about adjusting to her new role and the realizations that she has made.

Looking back on the last six years, Patty has amazed herself. She would never have guessed after her first year that this is where she would be at this point in her career. As she reflected, a sense of pride grew as she told of episodes of perseverance and willingness to collaborate. Her openness to accept tasks and to work with a variety of personnel has propelled her to her current status as a competent, hard working educator.

> *I still struggle with the reality that I am a teacher leader. I have always been a person who likes to be slightly invisible. "Don't stand out in the crowd," I always told myself. I don't like to get a lot of attention which I know has not been the case. It now seems I have no choice but to be recognized. I seem to find myself in the role of a leader daily. My progression from just classroom teacher into a teacher leader occurred rather rapidly.*

Childhood. In a privileged area of a southern town, Patty grew up as a reserved, shy child with an older and a younger sister. Speaking in a very matter of fact manner, Patty recalled growing up with amicably divorced parents who focused upon the needs of their children. Unlike many fragmented families, Patty's parents collectively nurtured and promoted their children's well-being.

> *I grew up in a divorced house. I felt like I never came from a single parent home. My parents worked very well together to make sure we had a nice stable home life. Even though they were divorced since I was six, we always did things together. So I think the community that I grew up with mostly had an involved mom and an involved dad whether or not they were still married or not.*

Although her home life provided a wide range of interactions with people from various walks of life, it was her school environment that challenged her. In reflecting upon her school experiences, Patty commented about the lack of cultural and racial diversity and how she sought out individuals who were not like herself and the vast majority of her peers in high school.

> *So I had a good diverse home life I think, but when I got to school it was very different. I mean, there was no diversity in my school. We were all white. We were all from the same community. And we all had pretty similar backgrounds. I grew up in a community where everyone looked like me, everyone talked like me. It was just all the kids in my classes were white; and I always – whenever we did have an exchange student or a student from a different background – I gravitated to that person. I just wanted people that weren't like me around. I wanted to have a diverse group of friends and it wasn't very easy in my environment. I've always been a little unique and maybe I just – I wanna have a wide variety of people around me. I don't like sameness, I guess.*

Working as a nanny in high school and in an after-school program in college provided Patty experiences in working with children that would later transfer to her future career in education.

> *I was a nanny through high school for two little girls – doctors kids, of course – but, so, I spent a good three years doing that every weekend, a lot of nights, and they just kind of became like my own. Then when I got to college, I worked at the YMCA and was the Assistant Director at the Primetime.*

Patty's parents envisioned her career path in the field of medicine. Both of her parents were professionals in the medical field. Her father was a chiropractor and her mother was a dental hygienist. Most of their friends were also in the medical field, and it was her parents' ambition that she and her sisters attain their advanced educations in some field of medicine as well.

> *It was ingrained in my head that I was going to be a doctor growing up. Once I got to college and got to explore my options…I always loved kids. I always worked with kids. I thought well, I'll just be a doctor for kids. I'll be a pediatrician. I got into it and I just – my heart wasn't in it.*

Gaining a new sense of personal independence, and realizing that medicine was not the field she wanted to pursue, Patty saw the field of education as a way to connect with children. She was accepted into an urban teacher preparation program. Without much knowledge of what she was getting into, Patty set upon a professional course that would change her life.

> *I looked into the different education programs at* [the local university] *and just made my mind up that day -probably my sophomore year. I didn't get into the early childhood program during the interview process and the urban program contacted me. Once I got to learn more about that program, I felt like it was more for me anyway.*

Patty's attraction to diversity and children was a major factor that influenced her decision to remain in the urban teacher education program. Through her preparation program, she had opportunities to have field experiences in a wide variety of settings, but it was Smith Elementary School that she was particularly attracted to.

> *I especially fell in love with Smith Elementary School, and just knew it was where I was meant to be.*

She felt a strong connection to this school and was hired into the school as a new teacher.

> *I'm here for a reason and I know that I'm effecting change and my kids are being successful. I believe this is where I'm supposed to be.*

New teacher. Patty began her teaching career in the same grade-level in which she completed the internship that was the culmination of her teacher preparation program. Perhaps the most unique experience and possibly the most critical circumstance of her career was that her mentor from her internship became her co-worker and mentor during

her first year of teaching. Patty's mentor's proximity contributed greatly to the professional support that Patty received that first year. Patty's classroom was next to that of her mentor, who continued to assist her in a formal and informal mentoring capacity.

> *I was so fortunate to be basically right next door to her the first year as a teacher here. I think I even got more support that first year than I did as a co-teacher in the classroom* [during my internship] *because she knew I was on my own and she knew I was struggling at times. She knew how to read my face and jump in and help me when needed. She was a very strong role model of what an educator should be.*

Describing her mentor, Patty recalled her as a strong, compassionate teacher whose enthusiasm, care, willingness to try new things, problem-solving skills, in-depth thinking, community activism, professional learning, and instructional expertise were all traits that were exemplified through her daily practices. Although Patty's mentor changed schools, she still maintained a strong personal and professional relationship with her. Patty attained an understanding of support, collaboration, teamwork and the importance of mentoring through her turbulent first year. This mentor was also the person that Patty would follow as the new grade-level team leader.

During that first year, Patty's greatest struggle was to maintain an orderly classroom. Patty reflected upon this first year as a failure and attributes it to her inability to establish a climate of respect between herself and her students.

> *I cried every day. Everybody knew I was suffering. I let things affect me too much personally that first year and got emotional and was trying to do everything. No, it was just I went in – even my first year – with the notion that it's gonna be perfect. I saw we had a difficult year my internship year. We had a difficult class that year as well. And I thought, these kids are gonna be fine, they're gonna do what I tell 'em to do. They're gonna really see, they're gonna love my activities, they're gonna learn. So, I was being a little naïve, I guess. Even though I knew the environment, I knew*

> *the kids, I knew the culture and the climate, that I still just thought that won't happen to me.*

Patty's mentor, with the assistance of others, volunteered to support her through various means to meet the daily challenges she faced.

> *I was able to ask so many veteran teachers at that time for help and they were able to. If I said I really don't know how to teach this or I really don't know what to do about this behavior, people were just so open with me. I thought that's something that I want to portray when I have myself together (laughter) to do that.*

Patty gained a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation for the teachers who shared their many talents and the time they took from their own responsibilities to mentor and assist her. Her understanding of being an educator was significantly expanded through the actions of her fellow teachers. The importance of building a network of support transcended any previous perceptions she held prior to that year.

> *The people I learned from encouraged me to make a difference in my work. Teaching goes beyond the contracted hours. Teaching is more than what occurs in the classroom. From my role models, I learned that teaching includes working with colleagues, collaborating, taking on leadership roles, and continuously learning new things.*

Patty began to question her choice of career after having two difficult classes, one in her internship and another during her first year of teaching. Not sure if she would finish the year, Patty shared her realization of being unsure and operating out of a sense of survival rather from her own beliefs.

> *Upon completing my first year teaching at Smith Elementary School, I seriously questioned whether education was the career for me. I was deflated a little bit my first year. When I think back to my first year as a teacher, I thought, I'm never gonna make it. I'm never gonna make it. I've always been patient, but that first year, I just was so lost that I was not myself.*

Her self-motivation and the knowledge that she had the support of other teachers, motivated her to continue her first year. When questioned why she stayed, Patty's answer was simple and straightforward.

> *I won't quit anything. It just kills me to quit something, so I don't quit. I wasn't gonna be a teacher that left those kids in the middle of the year, no matter how hard it got. I was gonna be there, even if I had to have four other teachers in there helping me. I loved the kids. I knew they needed me. I knew I needed them to learn from and grow. It was hard some days, so I'd sit in the car and go, "Okay, here we go. Today's gonna be better." I just – I tried to start each day fresh.*

Patty spent the summer after her first year reflecting on her career, classroom practices, and her role as a teacher. She concluded that she needed to command respect from her students and that she needed to let students know beginning the first day that she was the teacher and she was in charge.

> *That whole first summer after my first year, I thought, what can I do differently? It made me realize how the beginning of the year is so important. The big change from the first year to the second year is I refused to let children talk to me the way they did that first year; and they talked to me like I was a dog. I would get called names or just different things and I thought that's not right. You're not gonna fuss and fight when they ask you to do something simple. So, I got tired of it. It didn't take long – and I just didn't know how to stop it.*

Asserting her role as the teacher the next year gave Patty a new perspective on how she viewed her choice of career. Patty's growth in classroom management built her confidence of influencing student choices and affirmed her belief that she had chosen the right profession.

> *And the second year, it was, "I'm not going to. I am the teacher. I am in charge. You will respect me." And that made all the difference, I think, because the little things, I could handle after that, as long as they knew that it was a classroom and that I was the one in charge. It really made a huge difference.*

Maturing professional. Patty continued to learn how to navigate the classroom in relation to cultural norms and community expectations. When the topic of culture emerged in our first interview, Patty initially stated that she "knew the culture and climate." However, as the interviews progressed, she admitted that she really did not have a deep understanding of the culture and climate surrounding the school. Patty shared that she had some realizations about how different choices early in her career could have changed the outcomes of interactions with students and parents. One example of an early experience involved an agitated parent.

> *A parent that I had never seen just came in and started yelling at me one day. I didn't know what to do. And I think this was before we had* [a school resource officer] *or it was one of those days where nobody was here. So it was very challenging to calm this man down and to get him to do anything. And I really didn't know what to do, and I don't even know what I did. It was scary. It did not matter what I said or what I did. I was denying him his child. I was very composed during it, of course. Then I went and cried after someone was watching my children. (Laughter). But I mean it was in front of all the children. He* [the student] *was embarrassed that his dad had done that and so that child and I had to work it out in our way because he was scared.*

As Patty described this parent confrontation, her emotions of surprise, confusion, frustration, fear and embarrassment resurfaced. Even after five years, the trauma of the incident had not left her. However, since that incident, Patty has learned that her responsibility in conversations with parents is to listen first, and then present her viewpoint.

> *When I do have an angry, not a screaming parent, but a parent that's upset, I usually let them talk because sometimes they just want to talk and get it all out. And after they get it out, I say you know I understand where you're coming from. Here's my point of view. They're usually fine after that. If you try to interject, that's usually when it escalates into something*

> *bigger. So that was something that I had to learn about the culture and climate of our school* [Smith Elementary School]. *Just things that were more cultural to the community that I work in now was very different from the community that I grew up in.*

Respecting the voices of parents and allowing them the opportunity to share their concerns was a critical element in establishing relationships. Understanding how to communicate and build relationships with parents and students were skills she continued to refine.

> *The first challenge I believe is being from such a different background than the students and the parents that I work with. I think sometimes that makes it very difficult to build that relationship with your parents if they didn't have a very good experience or if they just say you don't know. You're not from here. Those kind of things, so I think that's a big challenge and that's why I do all the different relationship building with the parents to try to combat that.*

Besides culture, Patty's status of being childless has further impacted parental trust in her role as a teacher. She did aspire to become a parent one day, but for now this lack of experience was another barrier she believed she must overcome in order to gain credibility with her students' parents.

> *If you're a parent as a teacher, I see a big change in the way parents treat other parents sometimes. As a young teacher who doesn't have children, I've had different battles as far as you don't know, you don't have any children. I just have to say no I don't. So that's been another thing that I've talked with teachers who I mentor as well about.*

Despite the challenges of culture and family status, Patty continued to grow within and beyond her classroom. Patty believed that her ability to listen, reflect, and question were assets to her professional development process. From these practices she created a vision of who she wants to be as a teacher and how she wants to influence her students in the classroom.

> *I realize certain steps in my career led me to become the person I am today. I began my career as a great listener. Anyone who had advice for me, I listened. I then became a more reflective and questioning individual in respect to my own teaching. Following this, I began to problem solve in my own class. Finally, I developed a true vision for myself as a teacher as well as my students.*

One of the practices that Patty incorporated into her professional routine was her daily reflection. Taking time to think quietly and to analyze the events and actions of the day, Patty used this time to decompress from the emotions of the day. As a form of self-therapy and an important planning strategy, this exercise has proven to be instrumental in Patty's growth.

> *On the way home every day, I don't turn the radio on in the car, I just leave it on quiet and I reflect all the way home. I've got a 25 minute drive and that's my reflection time and that way I have time when I get home to be a wife and to not kill my husband with 1,000 school stories. And I reflect and I think, okay, here's what I'm gonna do tomorrow. I jot it down when I get home and that's how I do it.*

Leadership emergence. Patty's vision of herself as an educator included confidence in her actions in working with others. Problem-solving and attending to difficult questions were referenced by Patty as examples of how she built trust with her peers. With this confidence, credibility and the trust of others, Patty began to see a shift.

> *Others began coming to me to ask advice, have someone to listen to them, and someone to problem solve with. I'm more confident in myself in my abilities that I do know what I'm talking about. I feel like I'm able to offer a lot of support and help solve problems. I'm the type of person that doesn't like someone to leave the room with an unanswered question. So it makes you feel good to be asked for support or help.*

Leadership responsibilities began early in Patty's career. Patty's introduction to formal leadership came about at the end of her second year of teaching when she was

appointed as team leader. She was also assigned a student from the local university to intern in her classroom for that year.

> *My third year – it was a learning process that whole year. I was team leader. I got my first intern that year. She* [intern] *really helped me to learn some different organizational skills for keeping up with things as a leader.* [She was] *instrumental in helping me to become an effective leader because of organization.*

Negotiating the levels of responsibilities in her work has been an effort for Patty. Gauging if and how well she handled her responsibilities inside the classroom, along with all the other school related activities, was a process that she consciously monitored. Not wanting to overwhelm herself with too many tasks, Patty has paced taking on new responsibilities related to her workload.

> *I'll take on this responsibility or this task and see how it goes and then see if I'm ready for a greater leadership role so I've kinda tried to build as I go not take on too much at one time.*

Her experience as a grade-level team leader was her first formal school leadership role. Serving in this capacity for the last three years, Patty attributed her leadership development to role models she has had at her school. Although Patty initially struggled with students and parents, it seems her greatest interpersonal ability has become relating to peers and fellow mentors.

> *Becoming a leader in an urban environment did not come naturally to me. I had to work at it. I believe I am now considered a leader because I learned from great leaders and role models. If I had not had such great influences to learn from, I do not believe I would be where I am at today.*

Coming into her own as a team leader, Patty realized that a rebuilding time was needed for her team. Patty understood that her appointment to leadership did not automatically warrant collaboration and team-work. Worried that her youth and

inexperience could work against her, Patty concentrated upon establishing relationships with her co-workers.

> *I kinda had to do some ground work because I was the youngest one on the team. I was the newest one on the team, but yet here I am your team leader. So, I don't know what else to call it besides relationship building. I had to get to know them, listen…a lot of listening. And then as a team, we were able to grow. We've done some really neat things over the last few years with our curriculum mapping and we meet over the summer every year at least once or twice to go over our goals and what we want to do as a team next year.*

In describing the professional and relational dynamics of her grade-level team, Patty saw their interactions as a shared partnership in which everyone collaborated to assist each other. Regarding her own role in this process, Patty viewed herself as a guide who assisted everyone else in their endeavors. Meeting twice a week, Patty saw this time as a way for team members to update each other on pertinent school and instructional business, as well as a time to build relationships with each other.

> *As the team leader, I facilitate and guide different meetings, but I also have a very capable team and they are willing to step up and delegate or step up and say I'm good at this, but I'm not good at this. I think within my team I try to check in with the team, not daily, but the two times a week that we do meet. We talk* [about] *our normal stuff that we have to go over, but then we talk about concerns and questions and just socialize a little bit too, which helps build a team.*

Analyzing her role as a team leader further, Patty believed she was a resource to not only her grade-level team, but also to other teams.

> *I think my team and other grade-level* [teams] *come to me for suggestions. And it helps me to learn too. I think having that little think tank, I always learn something from.*

Patty believed that her ability to be a resource to others was based upon several characteristics. Among these characteristics, she highlighted listening, a positive

disposition, a willingness to serve, and an ability to communicate ideas. She also addressed the need for a strong work ethic and a need to spend extra time in the role of a teacher leader.

> *You have to be a listener. You have to be able to contribute. To be a leader you have to be able to contribute your ideas or your thoughts or your team's ideas and thoughts. A positive personality, how do you like that? (Laughter). So I think you have to be personable. I think you have to be willing to serve, willing to learn and to grow. You have to be willing to put in the extra time and the extra effort. And if you're not, then there's no point in you being there because you're not gonna be happy about it.*

Patty recalled three specific changes that she believed contributed to her evolvement as a teacher leader. Her leadership skills were first noticed by other teachers and her building administrators as her participation in grade-level meetings increased; her ability to focus student learning through consistent classroom management grew; and she was given encouragement during the course of an evaluation conference.

> *I started to – with the grade-level team – participate a little bit more. You know, the first year, you just kind of sit there. The second year, I started throwing ideas as we collaborated and things like that. So, I think my role changed a little bit as a member of the grade-level in that way. I think it was a process that took time.*

Her ability to establish and maintain a constructive environment for learning gradually improved, and others noticed that less and less assistance was needed in dealing with student misbehaviors. Her classroom management took on a new tone as she asserted her position of authority as the teacher.

> *It started with the principals going, "Well, I never see you anymore," because they didn't have to come get my kids all the time, or "You're doing okay?" and I'm like, "I'm doing great – fine." So it was a slow real change in effect. Whereas the first year it was, I needed support – heavy support. Then the second year, they'd pop in at the beginning of the year and check on me, like they did much – almost daily – the first year to make*

> *sure I was okay. And that support slowly started to fall away and then I started to receive children who were in trouble, so I knew that my role on the team had changed.*

The third development she recalled was a surprise, post–conference comment that came from her evaluator. This powerful comment from her school administrator generated in Patty a stronger belief in her abilities to become a leader in broader sense.

> *During my last year of being evaluated before tenure we sat down for my summative and* [the assistant principal] *said, "I want to see you do good things. I want to see you on the other end of this paper one day." And I was like, "Huh?" My dad's pushed me all the way to get my Ph.D., and I keep just saying one day. But when he* [the assistant principal] *said that, and he had that confidence in my* [ability], *I thought maybe I should go back to school. So, then I decided that maybe my role as a leader in the school could be advanced in some way.*

After Patty became team leader, she also joined the school mentor team. Never forgetting how important her mentors were during the first years in her career, Patty was adamant about the need and importance of mentors for first year educators and new teachers to the school.

> *I serve on the mentor team as a mentor to another third grade teacher. But I also go to the mentor meetings where all as a group we have mentor dinners and we all meet together so I think that helps to build and establish relationships with those new staff members.*

Patty's perspective on mentoring was not of singular events in which a seasoned teacher informed a new person. Rather, Patty viewed mentoring as a two-way process, in which staff members of all stages of understanding learn from each in various ways. This reciprocal approach promoted learning for all educators.

> *You're always gonna need somebody you can lean on and somebody you can call on. I think that building relationships within the whole school building is vital to our success and our sanity. I guess more in that way of I try to get to know them and make sure you know, "If you need anything if*

> *you have any questions. Please come let me know" because we're such a large school and we have so many different things going on with new teachers coming in. I always wanted to make everyone feel like we were one big unit. I've got such an open door policy.*

Patty chose formally to expand her understanding of leadership by going back to school to complete an advanced degree in educational administration. As a part of her educational specialist program, Patty was required to complete a 500 hour internship. This administrative internship broadened her perspective on school operations and working with various school personnel. Patty's maneuvering through these activities further propelled her leadership abilities into the role of not just a grade-level leader, but a school leader.

One of Patty's school leadership responsibilities involved chairing the school accreditation process, which was an exercise in facilitating committees of all personnel in the school. She held the responsibility of coordinating personnel efforts at the building and district level for gaining national accreditation. She was also charged with coordinating the amendment of the school improvement plan, which sets the academic and professional goals for the school.

> *The School Improvement Plan has been a large part of my responsibilities this year. So that's been basically entrusted to me. Obviously the leadership team had a great role in that as well as the rest of the staff. But as well as compiling that and running the meetings, formatting it, going back to the different components and getting what I needed. That's been the bulk of my responsibility this year and also with accreditation.*

Since her leadership role broadened in a formal capacity, she has had many more experiences working with school administrators. Her open-door policy of working with teachers was one that she has also adapted for her interactions with administrators. She

viewed problem-solving as a key trait that teacher leaders must exhibit as they work to address student and school needs.

> *I think teacher leaders don't go to administrators with just problems. I think teacher leaders try to go to administrators with more solutions and to collaborate with each other and say, "This is what's going on in first grade or second grade or third grade and this is what I thought." And being trusted to make some of those decisions prior of course running by administration and get them involved in it. But not to just come with, I have a problem. But try to have some solutions. I think that's an important part of being a teacher leader and interacting with your principal or administration.*

Patty believed the greatest asset between teacher leaders and administrators was a collaborative relationship. Patty proposed that teacher leaders' relationships with administrators be collegial and focused on the common welfare of everyone involved with the school, adults and students alike. This relationship factor, as Patty suggested, was the cornerstone by which all other work is accomplished. Without the relational piece, the quality of work and the amount of effort generated suffer.

> *I've been through several different administrators in my short time here, but I think it's important to try to build that relationship in there. I mean they're* [administrators] *so busy, but sometimes I think that's hard for people to do. But as a teacher leader, it's something you've got to do so that they know that you are willing to do whatever you need to. Or you're willing to give information to your team and vice versa and be able to communicate so that she or he's, not responsible for communicating to your whole team. She* [the principal] *communicates to you and then you communicate it to your team. So it's a chain of command I guess. I'm very comfortable in talking to either one or all four of the administrators within the building, even though I might have been if I had not been in a leadership role. There are still other people that say I just don't go in their office. So it's, I think it's easier to build a relationship.*

From Patty's perspective, forming relationships promoted the growth of trust that must be in place for working relationships to exist. In essence, one cannot exist without the other,

and they must both be present to establish a positive working climate between teachers and administrators.

> *I think that helps to just being able to have that interaction with them* [administrators] *through the leadership team to build that relationship so that you can help support each other. Yes, trust is very important. It's essential I think. I think it comes with building relationships. You build that trust along the way. So for me, it goes hand in hand.*

Conclusion. Patty has overcome professional and cultural challenges as she has developed as an urban teacher leader. She has demonstrated perseverance and thoughtful consideration of her classroom and school needs. Patty attributed much of her growth to the many mentors who have influenced her evolution. She has found working in administrative capacities rewarding. However, she expressed a feeling of conflict concerning how her time was utilized during the course of the school day. Time spent for administrative tasks sometimes overlapped into instructional time needed for her students. Patty commented upon her own feelings and concerns regarding these tensions.

> *Balancing being a teacher and administrative intern has been a huge challenge as well. I think I actually have not given a 100% to my kids.*

In analyzing her brief career, Patty concluded that she has surprised herself the most. As she began to explain herself, she slowly smiled and made a comment that summarized her perspective of her role as a leader. Patty's sense of accomplishment and pride in her professional growth were evident as she shared this final comment.

> *So, I think after that first year, nobody would have thought I would have gone the direction I've gone. I'm just so amazed that this is where I am today. I never would have imagined that this is the path I would have taken. So, it's definitely a surprise to me. So hopefully I'll continue to do the right things.*

Patty is an example of a young, urban teacher who was assigned leadership roles early in her career. Because of her willingness to accept input from others, she has established herself as a reliable grade-level chair, mentor team member, and role model to university interns. Seeking to expand her understanding of leadership in a formal capacity, Patty has accomplished her goal of returning to school and attaining an advanced degree in leadership. For now, she is content to remain in the classroom as a teacher and to support her fellow teachers as a mentor and through various leadership opportunities. She plans to continue to establish relationships that provide the foundation for building supportive learning environments.

Case Analysis

Introduction. The analysis that follows examines Patty's data through the theoretical lenses of role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, and urban teacher leadership. Moving beyond the details of the story told above, this analysis provides a deeper view of Patty's career path. Prevalent themes that emerged from the data revealed how highly Patty valued collaboration and mentoring and illuminated her commitment to her chosen profession as demonstrated through the relationships she has formed.

Role Identity. ***Patty was a mentor.*** Patty received many hours of mentoring that taught her the value of collaboration between herself and her co-workers. During her first year of teaching, Patty had great difficulty asserting her authority in the classroom and questioned many times if teaching was an appropriate profession for her. Other teachers from her grade-level and from within the school offered assistance and modeled for her

the importance of support and collaboration. From gaining coaching and assistance in behavior management and instructional strategies, Patty's collaboration grew so that communication became more reciprocal as she began to gain greater understanding of her responsibilities as a teacher and a grade-level team member.

Because of her own difficulties and emotional upheaval in struggling to assert her role as a teacher, Patty formed a strong sense of empathy for others who are challenged in the urban classroom. Patty's struggle to establish her teacher role created conflict in her personal schema of roles. According to Kashima, Foddy, and Patow (2002), for individuals to retain role congruence, they must either realign their role standards or incorporate new roles. Patty chose to realign her role standards to resolve what Burke (2006) describes as role conflict. When Patty reorganized her role standards to gain congruence (Burke, 2006; Serpe, 1987), she demonstrated what Burke (2006) calls commitment to her role as a teacher. Since Patty utilized her teacher role frequently, the salience of the role escalated (Stryker, 1980) as did her commitment (Burke, 2006).

As Patty gained congruence within her role schema, empathy for other teachers who experienced similar challenges was created. Swann (1983) labels this role congruence as self-verification. As a result of this self-verification, Patty's teacher role included a strong belief in the importance of mentoring and collaboration. Her commitment to mentoring and collaboration sets Patty apart from other teachers. She exhibited confidence and willingness to share time, resources, and her professional perspectives. Patty's empathy prompted her to be at the forefront of mentoring other new teachers at Smith Elementary School.

> *I think if I'm not sure how to help, I'll say, "Let's figure it out." Then we'll sit down and we'll try to figure some things out. So I think that I'm supportive in the way that I don't say, "This is what you need to do."*

Patty was a collaborator. In her role as a collaborator, Patty actively sought out new teachers with whom to share information and to serve as a support to their acclimation to Smith Elementary School. Through Patty's guidance and collaboration, she also helped to build important working relationships.

> *When a new staff member comes on board, I really try to make sure that they have what they need and get to know them and build a relationship with them so that they have that support because I had such a great support when I started. I think that was so beneficial to my career that I want to pass that on to others when they join our staff.*

From Patty's efforts she has formed a network of support. Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995) maintain the value of collaboration and found that the effects from collaboration suggest that a ripple effect of expanding teacher roles and improving student learning capacities can result. Through Patty's informal efforts to network and collaborate with new peers, she was enhancing not only opportunities for teachers, but also students.

Distributed leadership. ***Patty views herself as a guide who assists others in their team responsibilities.*** Patty's initiation into the profession was influenced by a supportive team that worked with her to encourage her growth. Later, as she became the leader of her grade-level team, she was able to share her strengths, while tapping into team members' strengths to address student needs. As she has matured professionally, she has continued to operate under the team concept, while maintaining her role as the grade-level leader. As an active partner (Johnson, 1990), Patty's experience affirms

Beachum and Denith's (2004) research, which suggests that the power of teams supports teacher leadership. She has continued her team approach in her experiences working with larger school committees and the entire faculty of Smith Elementary School as she has taken on school-wide leadership roles.

In examining Patty's belief of collective effort, the type of distributed leadership Patty has been taught and continues to practice is labeled by Gronn (2003) as *institutionalized practice*. Under this style of distributed leadership, Gronn recognizes the importance of a formal structure of organized operation to utilize the abilities of various team members to accomplish tasks. Patty verified her own team's ability to do this and attributed its effectiveness to these characteristics.

> *We've definitely become a strong team over the course of the last several years. I think part of it is because we do have a good working relationship. We took that time to build that groundwork to be able to collaborate and work together.*

> *We all have our areas of strength and we know that about each other. So, we definitely work well together and we know how to admit when we don't know what the answer to something. We have that kind of relationship where I'm not gonna go down if I don't know the answer to everything. Other teammates are willing to go help me.*

Patty's collaborative efforts seem directly related to her early experiences as a novice teacher. Recollections from her childhood and early adulthood did not indicate that collaboration was influential in her previous life. Early in her teaching career, as Patty interacted with peers to learn classroom management strategies, and then began to share her own understanding of behavior issues and other professional responsibilities, evidence indicates that Patty learned the power of collaboration and collective effort.

Patty‘s commitment to her role as a collaborator became ingrained in her professional practices and, as a result, her support to others bolstered her success as a teacher leader.

Teacher Leadership. ***Teacher leaders are a resource to others.*** Patty believed she is a resource to other teachers. Patty's role as a leader developed through her formal capacity as a grade-level chairperson and was fortified through informal mentoring she has offered to new teachers at Smith Elementary School. As a young teacher, Patty was assigned a leadership position at the end of her second year of teaching because of a vacancy created by teacher attrition. As indicated by Little (1988) and Leithwood (1992), early ascension to leadership can be premature, thus creating difficulties for young urban teachers; but in Patty's case, this was not so. Unlike the teachers in Wasley (1991) and Johnson and Donaldson's (2007) studies, neither Patty's professional growth nor her relationships with other teachers was impaired by this early leadership responsibility. From this grade-level chair position, Patty informally built her influence through voluntarily mentoring and collaborating across grade-levels in curriculum planning activities with new teachers and others who sought support.

> *Teachers are very comfortable to come and ask me questions and we collaborate together and we do a lot of lessons and common planning. I plan with other grade-levels if they need it or different things like that.*

Once Patty was able to demonstrate her ownership of her new identity as a credible teacher, she was persuaded to assume leadership duties. As she has slowly immersed herself in formal leadership tasks, she has informally worked to offer support and to serve as a resource to other new teachers. Through these leadership building opportunities, Patty has grown in her acceptance of her role as a leader. Not as dramatic

as assimilating her teacher role, Patty's leadership role attainment has been a much more comfortable fit for her as she has continued to accept leadership tasks and completed qualifications for an advanced leadership degree in school administration. She seems to have comfortably integrated her leadership role into her schema of identities.

Patty has been able to traverse the challenges of her role as a teacher and that of a leader. Her ability to "change hats" indicated that she can shift in her roles and bracket her abilities for each. Only when leadership tasks encroached on student learning did Patty express her feelings of role conflict and guilt. As Patty has negotiated these role conflicts (Biddle, 1979), she often chose the role that posed the greatest situational need (Burke, 2006). She made no clear declaration during our discussions that teaching comes first, but she shared her attempts to attend to all situations that required her attention.

Patty's unwillingness to prioritize one role over the other suggests that her commitment to each role was equal and only shifted as situations demand. It is apparent that Patty has not prioritized which role, teacher or leader, comes first in her hierarchy of roles (Stryker, 1980). At the end of our sessions, Patty shared goals for her career path. She indicated that she would eventually like to serve in some administrative capacity and to remain in the urban context. After this revelation, I concluded that Patty is able to balance both roles until she is in a position to take on a formal role of a leader later in her career.

> *My big picture plan is to have children after I finish the* [educational leadership] *program. Stay a teacher or stay something more where I'm still involved in the classroom pretty heavily, and then maybe make that transition into administration or some higher administrative role later on. I would like to stay in the urban context.*

Urban teacher leadership. ***Partnerships with parents promote student learning.*** Building relationships with parents and students are skills Patty continued to refine and nurture as she worked in the urban context. Noting the positive outcomes that mentors and other teachers have modeled in cultivating parental relationships, Patty was a firm believer in the power of parents and partnering with them to promote student learning. Relating her beliefs on parent involvement, Patty shared her perspectives on reaching out to parents to keep them informed of student classroom performance.

> *I've watched mentors and other teacher have really good relationships with the parents and that helps especially for someone that's not from the community. Just getting involved in the community helps by doing the things Project GRAD* [Graduation Really Achieves Dreams] *has us do and the carnivals and things like that. But just building a good relationship with our parents is so key. It helps my years go much smoother when I have a good relationship with all my parents.*

Open communications build parental involvement. Patty's willingness to make accommodations for parents in order to secure communication opportunities was a leadership act that she adopted to communicate her high expectations for learning. Patty attributed early, positive contacts as critical to establishing open communication and positive parent relationships. In sharing her communication efforts, Patty noted the success rate she accomplished in contacting parents during the first reporting period of the previous school years.

> *I call all the parents the first week of school and give them some positive feedback on their children. I call and personally invite them to Open House. When it is conference time, I try to offer phone conferences for those that don't have transportation. That's been very helpful, because the last three years I've had a conference with all my parents with that first report card each year.*

Her belief in the role of parents as partners was evidence of her expectations for parents and for students in regards to their performance. According to Ladson-Billings (2000), teachers who do not hold high expectations for minority students may be viewed as operating from a deficit mind-set. Patty did not appear to operate from a deficit mind-set, and she explained her regard for holding high expectations and taking responsibility for students' learning.

> *I think that you have to have compassion to work in the urban context, but you also have to have high expectations. I've always tried to have really high expectations for the children. It's gotten more effective each year. I think you have to love what you do to realize what our kids may or may not be going through or may or may not have at home. But at the same time, you have to balance that out with high expectations. I always call it you have to know when to turn it off and on. When to say ok, you did not sleep at all last night. You need to sleep for an hour, but after that I expect you to be back with us doing your work. So you have to balance out their basic needs are being met, but also that you're responsible for teaching them.*

Patty's communication efforts moved beyond interacting and learning from parents to include her interactions with students. In our first interview, Patty said, "I love the kids. I knew they needed me and I needed them to learn from and grow." Her recognition of the reciprocal benefits of her needs as a novice teacher and the needs of her students demonstrated her understanding of what students have contributed to her professional development. Patty's openness to learning from others was not constricted by race, culture, age, gender, professional status or educational attainment. Her attitude allowed her to remain open to and considerate of everyone she interacted with in the school environment. Because of her openness, Patty has built and sustained effective

relationships that have supported her formal and informal leadership efforts as well as the learning of her students.

Relationships are the foundations of administrators' work. Patty viewed establishing relationships as critical to the effectiveness of parents, teachers, staff, students and, especially, administrators. Her perception of administrators included distinctions between their formal and informal roles. Patty believed the foundation of administrators' work was strengthened by their capacity to create and sustain informal relationships with staff members.

> *I believe instructional leaders are vital to the tone, atmosphere, and overall climate of a school. This begins with THE instructional leader, a school's administrator. Administrators must start with building informal relationships with their staff in order to have a good formal relationship with their staff. As a future administrator I must keep this in mind in order to be effective. I must also concern myself with the delicate balance between formal and informal* [roles].

If relationships are the key to building administrators' leadership capacity and school cultural cohesion (Tillman, 2003), then Patty's insight points to a critical leadership function. As she envisioned her future role as an administrator, Patty has recognized the importance of relating to people in different roles (Nieto, 2007). From her comments, it was easy to see that Patty wants to be an effective leader. Her definition of an effective leader seems dependent upon her ability to informally interact with peers and then to formally be relied upon as a decision-maker. To do this, Patty must also be "considerate of the ways in which a racially and ethnically diverse educational environment affects leadership practice" (Tillman, 2003, p. 4). If she is to promote a culturally cohesive environment, then as Sanders (1999) suggests, Patty should avoid fear

and stereotypes when interacting with families. Relationships provide the vehicle for building cultural cohesion and partnerships. If cultural cohesion is established, then according to Cotton (2003) and Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003), student achievement will be enhanced. In the role of teacher leader or school administrator, Patty has the willingness to improve the urban leadership capacity that Jacobson (2005), Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), Nevarez and Wood (2007) and Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) argue is currently lacking.

Conclusion. Patty's roles as collaborator, mentee, and mentor have contributed to her development as a teacher leader. Through the nurturing of relationships, Patty demonstrated the value of collaboration, mentoring, commitment to her chosen profession and care to the students and families she served. Patty has avoided the pitfalls often associated with early leadership attainment (Little, 1998; Leithwood, 1992) and has continued to expand her responsibilities as her tenure has lengthened.

Because of the collaboration of her grade-level team, the mentoring of other teachers and administrators, and the work habits she has learned, Patty's teacher skills and leadership abilities have developed along a dual path. This dual development trajectory supports the work of Beachum and Denith (2004), who found that the power of teams supports teacher leadership. Patty also practiced distributed leadership in the form of institutionalized practice (Gronn, 2003). Based upon Gronn's definition of distributed leadership, Patty's work as a team leader and knowledge of teaming concepts has enabled her to work with ease in collaborating with peers to address various school needs through

a formal structure. As Patty's involvement in school activities increased, she contributed to the empowerment of her school colleagues to collectively meet common goals.

Unlike other teachers who remain in urban schools on average three to five years (Haberman, 2005), Patty has no intention of leaving the urban context. Patty's life experiences indicated her desire to embrace the richness that diversity offers. Patty has accomplished this in her career and has effectively interacted with all learning community members to support students' learning as well as sustain her professional growth as a classroom teacher and as a school leader.

Amy, The Servant

Narrative

Introduction. Teacher leadership was a form of service for Amy. As a person who holds strong Christian beliefs, Amy's professional life is best characterized by her need to serve. Following the example of Jesus Christ, Amy sought to serve her community through volunteer church activities and teaching as a profession. Her willingness to impact her school beyond her classroom has been broadened due to her growing confidence in her instructional skills and belief in her responsibility to others.

Teaching in the same hometown in which she grew up and attended college, Amy described herself as a "giver and a helper." With an initial degree in Sociology, Amy knew that her true career calling was that of a teacher. Returning to school, she completed her teaching degree and became employed by the same school in which she fulfilled her course requirements during her pre-service time. Amy has taught in this one school for seven years. Taking on various responsibilities, Amy viewed teacher leadership as a double-edged sword. Although her efforts have been rewarding, time

engaged in other school activities has taken her away from her classroom responsibilities. This loss of time has become a concern for Amy.

Explaining that she "did not want to be anywhere else," Amy shared her story, concerns, and thoughts about her career and urban schools. All of Amy's interviews took place after school in the privacy of her classroom, except for one interview that had to be conducted in a secluded corner of a cafeteria. Amy's overall tone was that of a committed, determined teacher who understood the challenges of working in an urban context. Describing her students as "tough," she knew that her role at school was not to be a missionary, but to teach and guide her students to attain an education to better their lives.

Early life. Growing up in a nuclear family of a mom, dad and younger brother, Amy recalled a stable family life that included involvement in church from an early age. Working with different-aged kids, Amy contended that she recognized early an inclination to work with children rather than adults.

> *I've been in church all my life since I was in my momma's womb, the same church for 33 years now. I had worked with kids all my life through church. I helped younger children, younger than me. And I've always almost been more comfortable with children than I have with adults.*

The work experiences in church confirmed Amy's belief that she wanted a career that would allow her to teach and contribute to her community. Considering herself to be someone who needed interactions with people, Amy felt that teaching would be the profession through which she could accomplish her goals of service and helping.

> *I knew that I wanted to be in that profession where I could work with children. And I've always been a giver and a helper. Those kind of went hand in hand. When I started as a freshman at* [the local university], *I*

> *really had a desire to be a teacher. I wanted a career serving and doing things at church. I didn't want to sit behind a desk and shuffle papers all day long. I wanted to do something that was actively doing something or helping.*

When Amy began college, she relied upon the wisdom of the advising staff to give her the information she needed to meet her career goal. Since Amy was a first-generation college student, she trusted her advisor to give her the best information and guidance possible. Amy was led to believe that there would be no opportunities for employment in education, and she was redirected toward the field of social work instead of a major in education.

> *My parents had not gone to college. So, we didn't have a lot of experience in that realm. When I went to go be advised, they just told me there would be no jobs. They said by the time I graduated, there would be no teaching positions and I would not find a job. And being a very naïve freshman, I believed them. It's sad to say that I got steered in the wrong direction from the get go, and I ask myself, "Should I have made a strong stand?" But you know, going in college was very overwhelming to me. When you go and these people in power tell you you're not gonna find a job or this is not gonna work, you believed them. And they steered me to social work. So, I have a degree in social work. And it was still a helping profession. They said that it was kind of a sister profession.*

Increasingly, Amy knew that social work was not the profession for her. Even though she graduated in four years, she still had a desire to teach. In social work, she felt the level of paperwork and the lack of interaction with people, and especially with children, did not make her happy. She could not do this for the remainder of her life.

> *I wasn't interacting enough. There was a lot of paperwork. I did not feel like I was helping and I didn't like it. And I guess that's because it's not what I really wanted to be doing. You just kind of decide I'm gonna do this, and I guess if there's a job I'll find it. So in four years I graduated with a social work degree. Then I thought, okay you have a degree. This is what I'm supposed to do. I've spent my parents' money. I should do this, and I just… I couldn't do it.*

Following her heart, Amy made a decision to extend her education and attain a master's degree in education. Looking to gain a wider scope of experiences and to stay in her home community, Amy requested and was assigned to Washington Elementary School as part of her university preparation field experience. Unknowingly, Amy began her preparation in the same school in which she would begin her professional career two years later.

> *I went back. I did the two year program because I felt like I wasn't qualified because I never had the education experience. I went through that to get that experience and get my masters. I wanted to be a teacher in my own community.*

The host teacher for her field experience was a patient mentor who provided a collaborative environment. The openness and care he took in explaining various tasks and the time he provided for developing her practice were important for her. Amy explained the value of these experiences.

> *I could ask him anything, I never felt embarrassed to ask questions if I didn't understand something. He walked me through everything from field trips to filling out a book order. I mean he took time. I never felt like I was wasting his time by asking questions or taking too much of his time if I needed extra help and that's just where I really felt like I learned. The* [university] *things that I have learned, of course I needed, but I saw them in practice and it really came together during that intern year. Now we're colleagues and he's still someone I go to when things come up or I go ask advice because he has been teaching longer. I still go to him.*

Beginning teacher. Amy recalled her first year of teaching as "scary." Although she was successful in securing a position only ten minutes away from home at Washington Elementary, she was hesitant about accepting the responsibility the new position presented. Amy was insecure in her ability to communicate and teach first

graders. Reassured by the principal, Amy joined the staff and has since remained in the position as a first grade teacher.

> *The first year was scary. I knew I wanted to teach here. I loved this school. I felt the staff welcomed me and I just felt at home when I came here. And you step out on faith. I told my principal I don't know what I'm doing, but you maybe crazy to put me in first grade because your kids in that class may not know how to read by the end of the year. So I felt like I had prayed about it enough that if it was gonna happen, let that phone call come, if You* [God] *want me to be here. Because all that was new to me, not just the curriculum which was first grade, but it was trying to convey it to them in a way they understood. That was a big struggle that I had, not talking down to them, but coming from third grade to bring it down to a level that made sense to them.*

Amy recounts the employment conversation that she had with her principal. Filled with excitement and trepidation of teaching a different grade-level, Amy was forthright in sharing her fears and concerns.

> *When the principal called she said I have one job if you want it. I said I want it. I want to be there. And she said, it's first grade. And it got real quiet on the phone. She said are you there? And I said I can't, I don't know how to do that. I said I want it, but I was really worried about reading. I said I just don't know. That's the year you teach kids to read and I don't know how to do that. I've interned in third grade where kids came to me knowing this. I don't' know that I can do that. And she* [the principal] *was very laid back. You'll be fine. And so I accepted the position.*

Unlike her previous year with an assigned mentor as part of her university experience, Amy did not have a mentor to guide and assist her. Amy recalls that she was unaware that she had been assigned a mentor until late in the year of her first teaching assignment. This lack of guidance and support left Amy with strong convictions about the importance of mentors and their role with new teachers.

> *I found out who my mentor was like months into my first year. So, it sparked in me, if you're someone's mentor, they need to know that. They*

> *need to be aware that you're available and know that that relationship is there. To be honest the first year, I guess I would say no. We were on the opposite sides of the building. So, we* [one part of the first grade team] *were on one side, the other five were on the other. So you felt kinda isolated anyway, and she was a very quiet, keep to yourself teacher. She would help me, but just, she was not very outgoing.*

Despite the void of having no formal mentor, Amy soon learned she had a whole team of veteran teachers to rely upon as she began to realize the nuances of teaching first grade. When Amy discovered that she could not survive without assistance, she began to understand that accepting help was not a weakness, but vital to her success as a teacher.

> *The veteran teachers were the big resources for me. Everyone was very gracious. They would give you anything they had. They would share lesson plans ideas, tips on what kids could do and not do at different times of the year. Know your team, whether it's two of you or five of you, that's a resource. You have to use it or you'll sink. You can't do it all by yourself. I had come to learn that because I wanted to do it myself. But yet, it just came to the point, you can't.*

Through the veteran teachers' modeling, Amy was able to learn the meaning of being a team member and a mentor. Amy spent a lot of time listening her first year. Not wanting to misunderstand anything that transpired in the school, she carefully watched and paid attention to the school's dynamics.

> *That first year, I did a lot of listening. I would sit in meetings and I would just try to absorb. I asked questions, but I was just still a student -- just trying to take in what they were doing.*

In addition to her team members, Amy established a strong collegial relationship with her new suitemate. The suite concept consisted of two classrooms joined by a common office space. This close physical proximity allowed Amy and her suitemate to collaborate and network throughout the course of the school day.

> *Then I got a new suitemate, who had been teaching a couple of years longer than I had. We were both the same age so we were almost like peer teachers. We just bumped ideas off of each other and that really worked.*

The behaviors Amy learned through her interactions with her team and her suitemate have been replicated for other new Washington Elementary School teachers as Amy grew into on the role of being a mentor teacher.

Maturing professional. Over the last eight years, Amy has expanded the ways she relied on her team members and has now begun to serve as a resource to them and others as she has matured in her own capacities as an educator. In examining this shift from one who received help to one who gives assistance, Amy explained her need to give back.

> *I've always enjoyed this* [helping] *because I had good help when I was an intern and a first year teacher. The people that helped me were so good to me. You want to return the favor. You want to make their transition as easy as mine was.*

Amy steadily continued to mature. With growing confidence, her participation in grade-level activities and decision-making has expanded. After her fourth year, she began to host students from the local university to observe her classroom as part of their field experiences. Amy viewed this as a sign of affirmation for her developing instructional competence.

> *So probably years two, three, maybe even four, I felt I was still learning something new, not as much each year. It's like you felt more confident each year and you had ideas. So I actually had things that I could share. You felt more part of the team. So that has helped incorporate me in slowly to the group; you're not just the young person on the team anymore. After I had been teaching, I started getting pre-interns. They asked me if I would start letting pre-interns rotate through my room, and of course, I felt like it had not been long since I had graduated. So, I*

> *thought do I know enough to do this? It made me feel good that they felt I was a good enough teacher to have someone come in and watch me do something. That made me feel, ok. Maybe I'm doing the right thing. Maybe I'm teaching what I'm supposed to.*

In addition to giving and receiving support, Amy also believed that she and all other school staff members have the responsibility of participating in the day-to-day operations of the school. Amy's sense of responsibility shaped her involvement in school activities.

> *I think everyone should be involved in some form or fashion. I think that's important that you're doing things to help the school. What I do affects the whole school and same thing for every other teacher. There are enough of us to go around so that it would not tax several people if everyone took a small part, which is the perfect world. I feel it's my responsibility professionally to me, my staff and my students.*

Amy's sense of responsibility also meant she held a high standard of excellence for herself. Believing that her actions were a direct reflection of herself and her school, Amy thought that she should be giving nothing less than her greatest effort.

> *I really will do my best to do it the right way, if they've asked me to do something. It gets done so that they can be proud of it too. It's a reflection of me, but I'm a reflection of this school. Living in this community, you're always an example of your school. If I do a sloppy job of something, then what does that say about us?*

Amy's performance and level of responsibility have been influenced by the administrative support she has received. Working under two principals, Amy noticed a significant difference in her professional role with each leader. Amy described her relationship with her first principal during her first three years of teaching as a "very formal relationship" and one in which she never felt she could rise above the status of

being a "young intern." Discussing her leadership activities under this administrator, Amy shared her opinion of why she was not involved in activities outside her classroom.

> *I guess she had enough confidence in me to hire me, but I just did not feel that she saw me as a solid teacher at her school. I was a good teacher. I was a rule follower and still am. And I did what I was expected to do, and I did it to the best of my ability; just not someone that she would have asked for major leadership activity or anything beyond.*

During her first principal's term, Amy said that she and others noticed select teachers who were privy to certain communication and given opportunities that many other teachers were not. The limited number of personnel involved in school decision-making roles and the minimal levels of communication were of concern to those teachers who were not privileged to be a part of the principal's inner circle.

> *We had talked about this in our grade-level quite a bit that it was always the same people who were doing everything and asked to be on every committee. It just felt like there was a large clique of people over here who knew everything and the rest of us knew nothing. And for a while, that's really how you felt. And so, it was just this lack of information and communication. There was no information-going back and forth. And you just really felt isolated.*

The school climate generated by these restricted interactions troubled Amy and colored her view of school leadership. This lack of communication illustrated to Amy the need to expand involvement in school activities to a variety of personnel.

> *I am to that point now I'm involved in a lot of stuff. And it's one of those things that I did not want to become this group. I did not want to be the person that everybody resents. Why did she know everything or why is she involved in everything?*

Teacher leadership. Learning lessons from her previous administrator's tenure, Amy has accepted new responsibilities while being mindful of other teachers' perceptions of her leadership roles. Amy was sensitive of her own involvement as she

ventured into decision-making roles. She has attempted to be open with her communication and to actively encourage peers to volunteer for positions.

> *Any teacher can be on the PTO board. It is not an elected thing, anyone can come. I've made it a point, when we have board meetings just to announce to the staff: it's open. It's at 4:00. It's this Tuesday. I mean, anyone can come. A lot of my jobs or responsibilities, I still have because no one else wants them or no one else is willing to take them. It's not that this is my position. I've been elected to it, but it's mine. I'm done. That's why you try to be approachable. Let them know, hey you wanna take on something? That's great!*

The practices of her second principal promoted greater communication and inclusiveness that Amy perceived to be much more relaxed and open. During these last four years of her second principal's assignment, Amy has accepted opportunities to lead and to be an active participant in her school's day-to-day operations. Amy has been able to give her input freely and without the stigma of being a novice.

> *They* [the new administrators] *didn't know me as an intern. We're all on an equal playing field with them. The first few years with them, I just wasn't involved in a whole lot. I mean I was grade-level chair, but we all do that. I don't feel nervous when they call me. I tell them honestly what I think. I feel like I can take issues to them. I'm not afraid to do that anymore. I do not hesitate a bit. Whereas before, when I first started out teaching, my old administrator, I would never have done that.*

As Amy has matured, she has found her voice in expressing her opinion more freely and found greater confidence in approaching her administrators. Using both of these abilities, she has asserted herself as a professional educator. Amy's administrators have also grown in their confidence in her opinions.

> *I have learned to be, I wasn't always, pretty up front. If it's a valid concern for something that I feel for the staff or for the kids, I have no problems taking it to them. To just say hey or I email them or hey I need to talk to you about something. It's amazing sometimes I haven't been fired. I speak pretty plainly with my principals and when they ask for an opinion, I*

> *give it to them. I do not hesitate a bit. Whereas before, when I first started out teaching, my old administrator, I would never have done that.*

Her second principal has afforded Amy many leadership opportunities, and Amy has endeavored to support her school through these leadership activities. Recounting leadership opportunities over the last four years in her career, Amy's responsibilities have included tasks ranging from treasury duties to mentoring new teachers.

> *I am the grade-level chair for first grade. I'm on the advisory council as the kindergarten-first grade representative. I am on the PTO board. I'm the PTO treasurer. I am the chair of the hospitality and I am a* [university] *intern mentor. Past two years, the last two years especially, people come to me for a lot of stuff. Most of it is academic type stuff, but sometimes extracurricular school related activities or even personal things.*

When I asked Amy how she felt about all these responsibilities, she identified her attempts to "do them right" and people approaching her for assistance as validating signs that indicate she is in an appropriate placement. Amy's expressed sense of being in the "right place" and doing the right thing indicate her satisfaction in her job performance.

> *It makes me feel like it's the thing I'm supposed to be doing. That I'm here, I'm teaching. I'm in the right place and, and the responsibilities that are given to me, maybe I'm supposed to do them because I'm trying to do them right and if people ask me a question and they feel good about it. We get it answered. Then, it just kinda confirms to me you're where you're supposed to be. This is right.*

Defining the role of an urban teacher leader, Amy discussed the need for leaders to be role models, professional, and cautious about keeping their personal feelings out of tense situations. She also suggested that using good judgment in addressing situations can be challenging for new teachers who are stepping into leadership roles.

> *A teacher leader in this setting I think must have "tough skin." You can't allow things that are said by sometimes uneducated parents and family members to scar you. You must become a role model to beginning*

> *teachers so that they can watch how you react to problem situations, which are quite common in the urban school. A teacher leader must be the example of how to remain calm and rise above the situation. You must choose your battles and I think that this can be a hard lesson for new teachers to learn.*

Amy's acceptance of leadership responsibilities emanated from her personal traits of organization and task perfection. Her sense of being organized paired with a compulsion to have projects correctly completed have resulted in admiration from her colleagues. However, when co-workers have openly complimented her, Amy reassured them that her compulsion was not something to be desired.

> *I am a very behind the scenes person. I enjoy the organizing, the planning, the checking, let's get it fixed, let's do it. I am so anally organized. It is scary. I like to know what's coming. I like to get it ready and I'll help in that way. I mean it's like, everybody, they want to be like me, and I tell them, no you don't, because it would drive you crazy. It drives me crazy. I think some of it is personal. I guess sometimes I take on more than I should for my own sanity and for the sanity of my family. I just cannot stand it when things are not completed and things are not done the right way.*

Amy was driven by a need for correctness. Fighting the pattern of striving to complete tasks with perfection, Amy learned to be flexible with imperfection as she has gained confidence in dealing with spontaneity in the school environment. Amy understood that the flow of the school day was influenced by unexpected circumstances and changing student needs.

> *I really stress about things that I want to do it right and I want to do it the right way. And now I guess, as I've had more experience, my confidence level has grown. You've got to be willing to roll with the punches which I've had to learn. I'm doing better being more spontaneous. That's been tough for me, you have to be able to just compromise. You have to be able to give and take.*

Although Amy believed she was fulfilling her intended purpose in life, she still felt pressed for time between her instructional responsibilities in the classroom and the school-wide duties she accepted as a teacher leader. Often, Amy's planning time seemed to vanish as she was pulled out for different meetings or a need to fulfill a commitment outside her classroom arose. Frustrated with the lack of time she had for her own duties, Amy was conflicted about turning others away who needed her assistance.

> *Sometimes it is very taxing. I'm more than happy to help and I have the heart to do it and I want to. Sometimes you're just on overload. I told my husband last night, I feel like everybody else gets their plan time to plan for themselves, but me! I said it always seems like ooh, I've got computer lab today. I get 45 minutes extra plan time. Oh wait, they've called functional meetings at 3:00 and I'm the leader of that group. So, I spend that 45 minutes typing up minutes of this meeting we need to discuss and check the budget and talk to other people to get ready for that. I'm like crud. It's time to pick up the kids. I know everybody feels that exact same way, so it's not just me. I have to tell myself that, it's not about you.*

Amy's conflicted feelings were intermingled with frustration as a result of her desire to provide help to those who need it. Amy explains why it was very difficult for her to say no to others who looked to her for guidance and support. Torn between duty to herself and her co-workers, Amy has sacrificed by putting others ahead of her own needs. Her repeated reference to this dilemma during the course of our discussions demonstrated the salience this added tension held for Amy.

> *It's just hard because our plan time gets taken a lot with meetings. You have after school activities and duties and different things like that. It's just difficult. When emergencies pop-up or parents call, your time gets taken. What would take you five minutes, it could turn into thirty or forty-five minutes. For me personally, I need to go and pick up my child. So my time is done. When I didn't have him* [a son], *I stayed later or I could take a lot home. I don't do that anymore. If I chose to say no, to get my own work done, I would have such a feeling of guilt that I did not help that*

> *person. That's why I could not say no. I consider myself to be very self-sacrificing.*

Aside from the feelings of frustration, Amy also expressed a sense of satisfaction in her ability to help others. Working to assist fellow teachers in any way possible, Amy remarked that the opportunities for helping also generated feelings of enjoyment, excitement and hope. All of these feelings provided motivation for her to continue sharing her knowledge and assisting her peers.

> *I mean it makes you a confident person. It makes me happy, but, too, it makes me excited for them. And it makes me, I don't know what the word is for that, I guess I'm hopeful that they'll come ask me again. Hopefully, what I said or how we handled it will make them come back. And if they'll have more questions, they'll come back and ask me again.*

Clearly focused on her first priority of teaching, Amy was sensitive of how she was perceived by others. Relying on her belief in the Golden Rule of *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*, Amy was mindful of her interactions with others. Amy tried hard to refrain from projecting an air of superiority and to maintain an open working relationship with her peers and administrators.

> *I'm not an administrator. I'm not anybody that's over anybody else. I am happy to help lead up something if we need that, but I don't ever want them to feel like I'm overstepping my bounds. I guess my personal beliefs system pulls into the Golden Rule. You treat them like you want to be treated. I would not want someone to make me feel inadequate or make me feel like I was not a good teacher. I'm a teacher and that's my main job in this school. If the PTO budget doesn't get balanced, life will go on. We'll figure it out; this* [teaching] *is my main job.*

Amy has observed many of her peers who were first year teachers in the urban setting. Naïve and stressed, Amy has seen some teachers give up before they ever get started in understanding their students and the community they serve. Amy submitted

that the urban context had many more demands than other schools, and it was these demands that caused many teachers to exit urban schools.

> *I think that a lot of teachers don't understand the demands of an urban school. You don't come in just teaching kids and go home. There's just a lot of extra stuff. I think that they* [new teachers] *get very overwhelmed and our school being large, we just have a lot of extra demands of paperwork. There's just a lot that adds on. I think a lot of them* [teachers] *just get stressed really quickly. Some of our students' behaviors, they* [teachers] *say I'm not gonna deal with this everyday. I think sometimes when they come in, I don't think they know what to expect. They have this idea of an elementary classroom in their mind. I just don't think some of the things they encounter; they're not ready for or seen situations where these kids come from, the things they know. I just think that kinda shocks them. Sometimes it's just the pressures of dealing with the profession, plus the pressures of dealing with that. I think it kinda gets to people.*

Amy believed teachers who remained at Washington did so because of their commitment to students and the support that the faculty members gave each other. With a student body challenged by complex needs, the teachers and staff have created a cohesive, supportive environment despite many external roadblocks to the learning process. According to Amy, creating a sense of family has been an important key to the faculty and staff's cohesion.

> *It's a tough school. We have some tough kids. We have some tough families. But the reason people are here is because, they love the kids, and the support the staff gives each other. We have fabulous teachers here that work very hard. I think that grade-levels are close. I think as a school, we come together.*

The administration of Washington Elementary School has also worked to build a supportive climate by rewarding teachers who may otherwise go unnoticed. Selected teachers receive recognition in the form of gift cards from local business partners. This

recognition sparked much needed celebration for the urban staff to help build motivation and promote a more conducive working environment.

> *They* [administrators] *have done a great thing when we have staff meetings on Tuesdays. They're always handing out gift cards to recognize teachers that have done something in the past month. They really celebrate the successes that teachers do here. And I think that's a big deal.*

When I asked Amy if she had received any special recognition, she grinned broadly and blushed.

> *I've gotten a couple of gift cards for things. I'm one of the blood red girls that just turns blood red. It's great and it's exciting and everybody just gets excited especially when it's people that are so quiet who never say anything. They get called down front and everybody's going crazy, making crazy noises. Everyone hoops and hollers and it's just crazy. It's just a fun thing when we have to talk about the not so fun things. That means a lot to me; I think it means a lot to everybody.*

Amy appreciated administrators' recognition of faculty and staff at Washington Elementary School. Although the rewards and incentives for teachers generated gratitude and excitement, it was the meaning behind these prizes that was significant for Amy. These symbols represent the relationships she has formed and indicate the cohesive school climate that exists at Washington Elementary School.

> *For me, it comes back down to relationships with people. You have to feel like you're a part of that family. You have to show your support of the staff, not just professionally, but personally. We nominate teachers of the year every year, and I won that one year. And to be voted by your peers for that-- that was probably, I was afraid when they called me up to get my little paperweight that I would break down. I know some people don't care, but to me that was a big deal--that people think enough of me to nominate me for that.*

When I questioned Amy directly about her longevity as a teacher in the urban context, she related her thoughts from a personal and professional perspective. Amy

indicated that her long-term family aspirations will probably override her short-term job satisfaction.

> *Honestly, when I first started this job, I thought, oh I'll be here forever. But the longer I teach here, I know that I probably won't because this school does drain you. And I don't think personally, for myself and my family, I could teach in this school for thirty years and then retire. I think that it would wear me down. My family is my priority and sometimes, being a teacher leader in the urban school setting does not lend itself to this.*

Looking to the future, Amy revealed that her priority of serving may shift as her family status changes. Amy would like to be in the same school as her children, but she was content to remain in the urban context at the time of this study.

> *As my personal life changes, I would consider working in a smaller school that has more community support just to alleviate some of the stress and pressures that gets placed on me. My child (and someday children, God-willing) is not zoned to* [Washington] *and I would want to be involved with their school activities as well. Because of that, I might consider taking a job in a different kind of school. I have not reached that point in my life yet, and I am still very happy to serve in the urban school setting. At this point I don't have any plans to leave. I still have got some gumption left.*

Amy also shared her thoughts about the possibility of leaving the classroom for an administrative post. She was adamant about her choice of not seeking out such a job. Although she felt qualified to take on the administrative tasks associated with principals' roles, it was the required attendance at unscheduled system-level meetings and the high mobility of principal assignments that she rejected.

> *I think that I have the skills and some qualities that would allow me to do that* [become an administrator]. *They* [administrators] *are pulled out of the schools so much and the meetings they have to attend. All that kind of stuff they have to do, I would never want to do that. Not a bit of my body would desire that. If it was in a small school and you got to stay with your staff and your students, maybe.*

Conclusion. Amy believed she has used her profession as a means to model her beliefs in Jesus Christ and serve her community. Her willingness to serve has led her to the urban context, where she has spent the first seven years of her career in a first grade classroom. Devoted to her students and fellow teachers, Amy practiced the Golden Rule as she stepped outside her classroom contractual duties to make her school a positive example in her community. Driven by a need for organization and perfection, Amy was admired by others, but she was quick to admit that her compulsion was not something to be desired. Amy has sacrificed time to do her own classroom work in order to help others, but she felt caught in a dilemma. Amy explained that if she did not assist her fellow teachers, she would feel guilty of not providing support. Amy would rather forfeit her time and be frustrated rather than allow someone to flounder unassisted. Through fulfilling her professional responsibilities, Amy has demonstrated her commitment, passion, and a willingness to improve the quality of her school by the service she has provided.

Case Analysis

Introduction. My analysis of narratives for Amy revealed significant themes that emerged from the data as they pertained to her roles as a teacher and as a teacher leader. Amy's perspectives on role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership and urban teacher leadership were formed by her experience in a single context over the last eight years as a first grade teacher in an urban school. Amy's commitment to her school, students and fellow teachers was evidence of the care and attention she gave to her job-related tasks and leadership responsibilities.

Role identity. ***Amy was a servant.*** Because of Amy's faith, she felt she had a responsibility to serve others. Amy believed that modeling Christian principles by serving others and living by the Golden Rule were important tenets of daily life, whether in professional or personal settings.

> *I can't help but look to my own personal belief system as well which defines who I am, therefore, how I act in my professional life at school. Being a Christian gives me a unique perspective, especially in a profession that deals with people on a daily basis. I have a passion for helping others. I consider myself to be a very giving person because I always seem to end up giving more than I receive in return. I have just come to the realization and understanding that God gives me these opportunities to help, AND that everything is not about ME!*

Placing a special emphasis on "AND that everything is not about ME!" Amy demonstrated her ability to look beyond her own worldview to take on the perspectives of others. This ability is defined by Mead (1934), Stryker (1962), and Schwalbe (1988) as role-taking. Amy's role-taking ability allowed her to empathize with others and focus on the needs of the students and families she served.

> *You go to church and you believe what you believe and you just look at things differently. It effects how you treat people. It effects how you look at a situation. You know you have to think, what if I was in their shoes? Knowing what you've been blessed and knowing that could be me. This is where I've been placed in my station. I feel like this is where God wants me to be. It's not always an easy work day, but until I'm led somewhere else, this is where I am. It makes it hard to say no when people ask me to do things because it's like, you're here for a purpose.*

Relating that her faith permits her to look at things differently, Amy's career provided an opportunity to demonstrate care and compassion for others. For Amy to interact with others effectively, she had to consider various perspectives. Burke and Reitzes (1981) and Stryker (1968) contend that the importance individuals attach to their

identities determines the amount of effort and how well they enact a role; this is recognized as their measure of commitment. Amy's commitment (Stets, 2003; Stryker and Serpe, 1982) to her role as a Christian was the most salient role in all the contexts of her life. Because of Amy's Christian worldview, she qualified for what Lambert (2003) describes as having a "strong sense of self" (p. 422).

Amy was a mentor. Amy was assigned to a supportive, formal mentor during her pre-service field experience; but during her first year of teaching she received no formal guidance. Experiencing a lack of support made Amy aware of the importance of having a full-time mentor. Since she was unaware that a mentor had been assigned to her months into her first year, Amy took the initiative to seek out another teacher who was in close proximity to her classroom and who was open to collaborating with her. In reviewing her beliefs about mentoring, Amy saw mentoring as an extension of teaching to share her craft knowledge and as assistance to others to avoid professional pitfalls that she experienced. Amy's beliefs were aligned with the findings of Katzenmyer and Moller (2001) who state that teacher leaders "…..identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders….." (p. 5).

> *It goes back to being a teacher. You like to teach. You like to teach people new things. You want to help them figure stuff out. And I think that's part of it. It's knowing that something that you learned has helped somebody else or will help somebody else or will save them from a mistake that you made that they won't have to.*

Amy identified mentoring as something she did for others. She believed mentoring was a way to help others. Below, she references mentoring as a reciprocal process through which she not only helped others, but received help herself.

> *I enjoy the fresh ideas that new teachers bring with them as well as being able to share the lessons and experiences that have made me the teacher that I am today. I enjoy being someone that all teachers can turn to for answers, support, guidance, etcetera, in a non-threatening manner.*

Amy shared that she saw herself as a resource to other teachers. Whether dispersing information or advising, Amy made her time and knowledge available to beginning teachers. Amy's outreach to others promoted a culture of success (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009), in which she wanted everyone to be accomplished and feel competent in their practice. Perceiving herself to be "non-threatening", Amy alluded to her belief that her openness and approachability contributed to her interpersonal skills, which Krisko (2001) and Leithwood, Jantzi, Ryan, and Steinbach (1997) conclude are necessary for constructive teacher leaders. The foundation of Amy's interpersonal skills was based in her commitment to *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*. Based on this tenet, her service to others was validated.

Distributed leadership. ***Increased participation can ease the workload among faculty and staff members.*** Amy recognized the importance of collective effort. However, many other teachers on her school staff have not participated in non-classroom activities. This void created anxiety and tension for Amy who felt the burden and overload of such tasks could be eased by greater participation among faculty and staff members.

> *I know we have other good people who could step up and help and some just choose not to. A lot of times, to be honest to, no one will take positions, or no one will do things that they say need this or this and there are only a few people willing to do things. And it's sad, because it's like they're an awesome resource to draw from and they're not sharing that. It's a big school and you would think we would spread that* [participation] *around a little bit or do rotations.*

Gronn (2002) describes institutionalized practice as the formation of organizational groups to carry out duties and tasks related to specific needs. From Gronn's definition and Amy's description of limited faculty participation, it was evident that Washington Elementary School operated under an umbrella of institutionalized practice. From Amy's perspective, greater numbers of teachers needed to contribute to school activities that were not structured within the confines of grade-level teams or voluntary school committees. According to Amy's description, there was a lack of distributed leadership at Washington Elementary School. However, through her own initiative, she has informally constructed ways to form a network of decision-making and task delegation. Gronn (2002) describes this informal, impromptu, collective practice as spontaneous collaboration.

In trying to understand the current lack of participation, Amy reflected back to the beginning of her career. Amy noted some practices that she observed which may have influenced the non-participatory trend in Washington. Referencing the previous administration's habit of maintaining a status quo of operation, minimal change occurred that required little if any participation from faculty members.

> *Things were kinda status quo for a while because our grade-level did not change. We had the same administration, so there were a lot of things that just kinda rolled on. You know, you kinda get in the rut of things.*

Another factor that could have contributed to the low level of participation was grade-level chair assignments. Grade-level chairs remained in their positions for extended periods of time, and some who stayed in those positions were not open to sharing

information. Amy witnessed these practices with frustration and resolved not to be like that if she were ever placed in such a leadership role.

> *There was no information-going back and forth and you just really felt isolated. You know, this was a colleague… things weren't happening like on paper and in theory they should have been happening. So from that, I knew or I wanted to when I got to that position, if I was put on something as a rep, it's my job to tell them what I've talked about. It's my job to listen to what they say and take it to whomever…*

At the time of this interview, Amy considered the changes that have occurred with the new administration to be slightly positive. Moving to grade-level chair rotations and opening communication were two shifts that Amy observed. However, in relating how duties were dispersed at Washington Elementary School, Amy revealed that many times people who were already in leadership roles were tapped for additional tasks. This has been the case with her.

> *When they* [administrators] *see that you can do something, when you can fix something, they're like, "Oh, ok. Let's hand her some more stuff." So I think when you start that* [taking leadership tasks] *and they know you are willing, then the plate becomes full and they* [administrators] *ask you to do more, which is a good thing and I enjoy. But sometimes, when other teachers look to you for assistance and direction, sometimes it's exhausting. I mean sometimes when you feel like you're carrying a heavy load, it gets tiresome. It's not just one or two people that seem like need assistance, it seems like there is always a bunch.*

Although Amy was willing to serve and enjoyed opportunities to help, she has found that dealing with large numbers of tasks can be exhausting. In working through this problem, Amy has recognized her grade-level team as a reservoir of support. She realized that linking up and asking for help was not a sign of weakness, as she once believed as a new teacher, but a sign of strength. Amy's willingness to seek out others for delegation of

tasks and shared decision-making is an example of her efforts to form an informal style of distributed leadership, also known as spontaneous collaboration (Gronn, 2002).

> *Know your team, whether it's two of you or five of you, that's a resource. You have to use it or you'll sink. You know you can't do it all by yourself. I had to come to learn that because I, I wanted to do it myself. But yet, you know, it just came to the point of you can't.*

Through spontaneous collaboration, Amy has found ways to create her own network of support through daily incidental problem solving with her peers. Amy's professional experiences have convinced her that participation and networking were key supports to her role as a teacher leader. From these experiences, evidence was clear of the significance distributed leadership held for Amy, even though it was not a routinely practiced concept at Washington Elementary School.

Teacher leadership. ***Being responsible is a way to help the school.*** An important dimension of teacher leadership that Krisko (2001) identified suggests that teacher leaders are willing to take responsibility. Amy's willingness to work outside her classroom for the benefit of the school is an example of the responsibility she believed was part of her duties as a faculty member at Washington Elementary School.

> *I feel like if I'm a teacher at this school* [being involved is] *part of my responsibility. I think we all should do that. I remember teachers who were involved in things and you went to after school stuff and you saw them there. And they* [teachers] *may not understand what it means when you have this meeting or that meeting, but I think that it's important to be involved and know what's going on because it's not just about my room.*

Accepting responsibilities within the school made it possible for Amy to build connections and see the alignment of school goals and direction. Because of Amy's involvement in various school committees and tasks, she has a greater sense of the inner

workings at Washington Elementary School. Amy affirmed her ability to see overarching goals and "the big picture" at her school. Because of all of Amy's unique leadership positions, she has been privy to information that has enhanced her decision-making skills, which in turn has enabled her to understand how various activities and personnel interrelate. In association with added responsibilities, Amy also mentioned the importance of time management and the skill of multitasking.

> *Well, multitasking and the big picture, I think go hand in hand. A lot of things just relate, and they should relate; in fact, everything that goes on should be done for the benefit of the staff, the students, school, whatever. So all that I think relates, and you can't do both if you don't have time management. So I mean, I think it all rolls into one. I think you kinda have to have a good mix of all that to fit together.*

Communication is critical to the function of leadership. Amy worked hard to maintain open and clear communications with her peers. Reflecting on her early career and the process of communication among previous teacher leaders, Amy has worked to improve communication in her role as a teacher leader.

> *Communication with our administration has gotten a lot better. I'm on several committees and just letting it* [information] *flow through you. Pass it along. If I was not a teacher leader and I was a staff member that was depending on someone to give me information, I would want to know what they knew. I would want them to tell me everything they knew. I owe them that.*

Amy's confidence in her ability to share information and the open manner she addresses issues were supported by the way she has been received by peers. Her interactions with fellow teachers made her conscious of the importance of maintaining an amiable demeanor.

> *I feel I have good communication skills and a personable attitude, which make colleagues feel comfortable approaching me about a variety of*

> *topics. I think that I am approachable, or try to be so that people know that I don't want them to feel embarrassed to ask me something.*

Amy's actions reinforced Krisko's (2001) findings that good interpersonal skills are important to teacher leaders' effectiveness. Amy's awareness of how she was perceived by others was a significant understanding to her role as a teacher leader. She has realized her role must be positive and open in order to engage others for the overall good of the school.

Although Amy's openness and approachable demeanor made her effective in acting as a resource to peers, her welcoming demeanor also worked against her. If fellow teachers relied on her as a key supporter and felt comfortable seeking out Amy for assistance, then it followed that she would be repeatedly approached. This constant barrage will continue to infringe upon her time and detract from her individual responsibilities as a teacher; thus adding to the resentment she already felt regarding her loss of time. Smylie and Denny's (1990) research confirms that time limitations are common concerns among teacher leaders.

In addition to the atmosphere Amy created to share information, her dedication to finding needed information was also viewed as a constructive attribute. Committed to following through with answering peer questions, Amy's persistence in locating information was a result-driven process. Amy's determination to provide assistance was apparent.

> *If they ask me something, even if I can't get it done, I'm gonna get back with you and tell you what happened. If they mention something to me, if I write it down, something will happen. I'll go talk to whoever. They may not get what they wanted or they may not get the answer they were looking*

> *for, but we'll figure something out and I'll get back with them. I don't leave them hanging.*

Amy shared that she also needed time to express herself. However, she noted that she was selective with whom she chose to communicate in an open fashion. Careful to disclose her candid thoughts with trusted veteran teachers, Amy conveyed this as an important strategy.

> *I have my share of complaints and times when I need to vent, but I try to do this with veteran colleagues instead of younger colleagues who are just starting out in the teaching profession.*

Amy's thoughtfulness with regard to how, when, and with whom she chose to share her concerns and frustrations demonstrated self-control and patience. Amy was thoughtful about the image she portrayed and the level of responsibility she has to others. Through these considerations she demonstrated maturity in and self-protection of her role as a teacher leader.

An overload of responsibilities can create conditions for change. Continuing with the explanation of her need for greater participation at her school, Amy reinforced her frustration concerning the time she has sacrificed to assist others.

> *When you give your time to help somebody else, a lot of times when you don't get your work done, that causes you to stay later to get work done which bumps everything in your day or when something unexpected comes up. It's something I love to do, and I would not give up doing it, but in the same respect it can be a burden when everyone doesn't pull their weight and you're trying to help do that as well. It just kind of taxes you.*

While Amy's concern was valid, at the same time, she stated, "It's something that I love to do, and I would not give up doing it…" This was a clear example of the conflict she was experiencing between her two roles as a teacher and a teacher leader. Amy's sense

of service over self was an indication of how she sometimes made leadership responsibilities a priority over her duties as a teacher.

Amy's role identities of being a teacher and a teacher leader were in conflict. Her most dominant role, servant, required her to place herself second to others' needs. In doing this, her needs as a teacher were not being met. Her role as a leader has taken precedence due to the service to others she provides. Amy was in a precarious position in her role as a servant. Her deep commitment (Stryker & Serpe, 1982) to her servant role was important to both of her roles in education. The conflict of time and service over self were two tenets that created role conflict (Burke, 2006) for her at the time of these interviews. As Burke (2006) and Serpe (1987) contend, an impetus of change may be prompted when roles become conflicted. How Amy chose to make this change, whether by relinquishing a role or realigning her role standards (Kashima, Foddy, & Patrow, 2002), is unknown. However, a realignment of standards could be adjusted through a change of teaching context, as indicated by Amy.

> *After seeing all of the extra demands that are placed on teachers in the urban setting, I am not sure that this* [remaining in the urban context] *will be possible. Professionally, it might well be a possibility. Personally, however, this may not be the case. I say this because my family is now growing and I have other outside responsibilities that I did not have when I first started teaching.*

Additional comments that supported the possibility of Amy seeking role congruence were shared in the narrative analysis portion of this case study. These comments reflected her desire to work in a school that was smaller and teach in a school attended by her children.

Urban teacher leadership. ***Urban teacher leaders must have a positive presence in the community.*** Amy's status as a community member reinforced her added sense of purpose in promoting and maintaining a positive image for Washington Elementary School. Understanding the significance of modeling professionalism, Amy was aware of how she was a reflection of her faith, family and school when involved in activities during non-school time.

> *I feel it is also important for teacher leaders in the urban setting to have a presence in the community. The families and students that we serve need to see us as regular people who play, shop, and worship just like they do. You want the families to see that you care about the community as well as the students themselves. However, teachers must be cautious to maintain a positive image within the community because you are always a representative of your school no matter where you go or what situation you place yourself in.*

Amy worked hard to project positive teacher characteristics. She saw it as a responsibility to model appropriate behavior to maintain credibility, but also as a means to demonstrate care for the community and her students. When Amy stated that families needed to, "see us as regular people," she was referring to parents' ability to view teachers as approachable partners in their child's educational experience. Being approachable was a prerequisite for establishing relationships, and as Amy contended, relationships were critical for being effective in the urban context.

Urban teachers must build a network of support with others. For Amy, relationships create a web of support that is necessary to operate in the urban context. Noting the need for both personal and professional support, Amy believed collaboration was vital to building support and easing the work demands required in the urban context.

Crow and Pounder (2000) affirm that the relational aspect among group members can create cohesion to build commitment to group activities that lead to enhanced outcomes.

> *If you're in an urban school you need to find support within that school and without. You need personal support. You need professional support. An urban school is definitely a place where you cannot be doing it by yourself. You've got to connect with somebody, even if it's not someone in your grade-level. Just with somebody you can talk to, vent with, ask questions of … You have to show your support of the staff, not just professionally, but personally. You know we celebrate holidays, and we celebrate weddings and babies and we're sad when someone has a death. I mean you have to feel like you're apart of that family and that they care about you.*

An added factor that contributed to Amy's perspective on relationships was that a significant portion of the faculty and staff at Washington Elementary School were adult Christians. Amy commented that these relationships offered encouragement and, despite teacher turnover, her Christian co-workers provided reinforcement to her faith.

> *So I think that it comes back down to relationships with people. We have a very close knit staff. I'm blessed to work at a school where there're so many Christians that we support each other in a whole different way. We're not only colleagues, but we have that bond. And so that is a blessing to know that. It's a family and you feel very fortunate. Even though this school is very hard, I would not give up this staff for anything. Even with the flux* [teacher attrition] *we have every year, I'd put them up against anybody.*

Amy compared her relationship with Washington faculty and staff members to that of a family. When Amy stated, "I would not give up this staff for anything," she revealed a strong sense of loyalty and emotional ties she has to them. Her devotion to her peers was apparent. When Amy commented, "I'd put them up against anybody," she alluded to her belief in the strong, positive Christian principles she has observed in the actions of her colleagues.

Urban teachers must work to have a physical and emotional balance in their lives. Amy explained the value of securing peace of mind while working within the urban context. Often conflicted by the strain of the complexities of student and family lives, Amy confided that protecting herself was necessary to remain in the urban context. In protecting herself, Amy found it was important for her to retain a sense of balance by not letting issues in her urban school overshadow the rest of her life. During her university preparation, she was forewarned of the need to leave the difficulties of the urban setting at school.

> *They always told you that in your* [teacher preparation] *program, leave it* [emotional issues]*, leave it here. Don't take it home, but a lot of our kids and their situations, you can't. It's hard and you do think about it and you do take stuff home, but in the same regard trying to do that. It will be here when I get here tomorrow.*

Amy related that stress, when retained by teachers, can manifest into negative conditions in the classroom. One such manifestation was an unproductive teacher disposition that detracted from the learning experience. Amy believed the impetus for having a positive professional mindset should be the ability to bracket context-specific situations for teachers to protect themselves against counterproductive behaviors.

> *Do what I can today, but I can't overload myself professionally or personally because then tomorrow that affects them* [students]*. If I stress myself and get too tired, well then I'm cranky with them tomorrow. And that's not their fault. You have to find that balance. And I think in an urban school that's a big deal just because there is a lot of stressful stuff and a lot of extra things that that you have to deal with. So you've gotta figure out what balances for you and that's different for everybody.*

Amy suggested that teacher leaders model strategies for maintaining healthy dispositions so that they could share with new teachers ways they could be successful in the urban context.

> *Teacher leaders have to find ways to alleviate stress so that they can help the students in their class, themselves, and fellow colleagues who are new and may be struggling to keep afloat with all of the demands that being a teacher can bring.*

Amy's strategy to maintain balance in her life was found in her involvement in church and other faith-related activities. According to Amy, service to others was the driving force behind her roles as teacher, teacher leader, mother and Christian. Amy's abundance of giving in home, school and church, left little time for her own pursuits as an individual. Her service to others pervades every facet of her life as she lives out her faith.

Conclusion. Amy's faith provided a foundation for her work as an educator in the urban context. Considering the conflict that exists between her roles as a teacher and teacher leader, her longevity in the urban context was at risk. However, her performance as a teacher and teacher leader left no question about the passion, commitment, and service she renders to her profession. Amy's core belief system has evolved from her faith and was integrated throughout each area of her personal and professional lives. Operating from the servant perspective, Amy was steadfast in her principles and dedicated to her role as a teacher and a teacher leader. However, regardless of her perceived role and her context of operation, Amy's commitment to service was the most critical factor influencing her life choices.

Penny, The Teacher

Narrative

Introduction. Penny was always going to be a teacher. She had known from an early age that teaching would be her profession. Encouraged through high school by her teachers, she transitioned to college with confidence. Paralleling her desire to teach, Penny also demonstrated an inclination to seek out leadership opportunities in high school and college organizations. Through these activities, Penny gained a sense of having a voice and experienced the satisfaction of making a contribution.

Penny's five-year teaching career has been a fast-paced process of moving into school leadership roles due to her willingness and demonstrated skills. Her ability to contribute beyond classroom duties has positively impacted her school and given her greater confidence in future professional choices. Penny's story is an account of a young urban teacher leader whose path of influence has the potential to expand.

Over the course of four interviews conducted after school hours in her classroom, Penny shared her story of teaching and leading in the urban context. Her classroom, housed in a portable building due to campus space limitations, provided the backdrop for our discussions. The small space was tidy and organized; it mirrored Penny's ability to efficiently use her resources.

Penny was thoughtful and warm as she spoke about her life and career. Careful in selecting her words, she demonstrated diplomacy and professionalism as she shared her thoughts and recollections. Her loyalty to administrators and colleagues was a consistent undercurrent throughout the course of our sessions. Penny's eagerness to contribute was only exceeded by her desire to excel. As the youngest professional and the least

experienced teacher of all of the participants in this study, Penny's story provided a window into leadership from a more youthful perspective.

Early years. Penny was the older child and the only daughter. Brought up in a home with a father who worked as an engineer and a mother who served as a homemaker, Penny was taught the importance of taking responsibility and being trustworthy from an early age.

> *I was raised with strong morals and a belief in the benefit of caring about other people, being polite, and valuing others' opinions. They* [parents] *taught us* [about] *being responsible, being respectful. They just instilled in me a desire to be responsible, to be trustworthy. They taught us by example.*

Penny's parents not only modeled responsibility, but allowed her to practice being responsible. One of her early experiences with being responsible was babysitting her brother and her neighbors.

> *I had a younger brother that I was usually responsible for watching and helping take care of. I love working with kids. I don't like babysitting. I don't know why, but I never really enjoyed it, but my mother would encourage me to go do it. We had some neighbors who went to our church. They had three kids. I really didn't want to, but she would encourage me to go do it. I was always afraid they would ruin something and I would get blamed for it.*

Penny's parents also taught fiscal accountability as she began to learn to be responsible. Monitoring her progress and holding her accountable, Penny's parents closely supervised the management of her allowance to teach prudent spending and saving practices.

> *They gave us an allowance early on but they wouldn't let us spend it. We had to be very responsible with it. You had to set aside certain amounts. We could spend some of it. We had to save certain amounts.*

Penny also learned that order, organization, academic achievement, and trustworthiness were qualities valued in her home. Her father's expectations for order and organization became a life habit. Penny's academic achievement was evidenced when she earned the status of class valedictorian. The trust Penny's parents gave her created an expectation she never compromised.

> *If they thought I was at a friend's house, that's where I was. I appreciated that trust. I made sure to stay responsible and they always encouraged me to do well in school. I was never in trouble. It was always encouraged, and kind of expected, that you did well in school. My dad's an engineer and he's very strict about stuff. That's where I get my organization from. It has to be in order. I learned early on if it wasn't in order, then I was in trouble. So, I made sure of that.*

As Penny matured, she knew that she was destined to become a teacher. Her early experiences of working in church activities and informally helping others to understand concepts throughout her school career gave her a great sense of joy. She also learned early on that she was interested in teaching students in the intermediate elementary grades.

> *I'm one of those people who's always known that they wanted to be a teacher. Growing up I enjoyed being able to explain concepts to friends in school or people I was in a class with, even a younger brother, cousins. I worked in Sunday school classes and in vacation bible school classes in church. They were always in the third, fourth, fifth grade area. I really fit in well with the students. Those were the students I really enjoyed working with. I've always enjoyed it. I worked some with students in the middle school grades, and I liked the younger middle school age. They still really enjoy learning. It's not an effort to make them enjoy it. I don't believe I could do eighth grade.*

She spoke passionately of her love of teaching. The excitement she expressed as she shared her feelings and delight in helping someone else understand was evident.

> [I] *just loved being able to see them understand something because I had shown them how to do it. Or see them make a connection between something we talked about to their own lives. And as a teacher now, I still continue to enjoy that. To see them want to know more because of something I've talked to them about. So that's what I really enjoy doing and one of the reasons I wanted to be a teacher.*

Many family members influenced Penny along her professional path. Although her mother attended college to be a teacher, she never taught as a profession, only as an avocation in church. Aunts and uncles were also educators who Penny saw as role models. However, two high school teachers, a French and an English teacher, had the most impact when they allowed Penny to have teaching experiences in their high school classrooms. These opportunities gave Penny practice and encouragement in working toward her goal of becoming a teacher.

> *My French teacher and I did a lot of working together, teaching the class especially when we got into higher levels of French. We would teach the class things. We'd give these assignments and she could tell I really enjoyed doing it. My sophomore English teacher and I would do different projects and we would teach together on those. And I remember she noticed that I really enjoyed doing it. You find out what a kid wants to do and you encourage them.*

But there were other teachers who influenced Penny in a negative way. These teachers discouraged Penny from going into teaching, telling her that she was "too smart" to be a teacher. Penny's disbelief and irritation were evident as she recounted their comments. These negative voices proved to be an additional incentive for Penny to pursue her educational career.

> *That was a strange thing. I had some of them* [teachers] *had actually discouraged me. I made straight A's and I was valedictorian. And there were a couple of teachers that were telling me that I was too smart to be a teacher? Yes, telling me I was too smart to be a teacher, and I'm serious.*

> *And that encouraged me to go ahead and do it. Would you want somebody who was too smart to be your child's teacher?*

After high school, Penny enrolled in a local, private, faith-based college to pursue her teaching credentials. Just as in high school, Penny became involved in the student organizations. When asked why these were important to her, she explained, "I guess to know the reasoning behind stuff." Moving from one context to the next, Penny's feelings of self-confidence and self-efficacy did not waiver. She sought out leadership opportunities and asserted her presence by participating on a regular basis and taking on more decision-making responsibility.

> *In high school SGA* [Student Government Association] *was big, Student Government. You helped make decisions. They were the ones that met with the administration and found out what to do. I wanted to be on SGA. They had an executive council on SGA who got to make more decisions. I got to be on the executive council the next year. Going on to college, I didn't do SGA in college because* [the college] *is not as big, but there were several other organizations. One of them worked with the administration in the staff building. Not the professors, but the President of the College, the Provost of the College. I got involved in that organization. I guess to know the reasoning behind stuff.*

Unlike her pre-college education, Penny now faced diversity as a part of her experience. Growing up in a community that was affluent and White, Penny relied on a more experienced and street-smart roommate to interpret cultural and racial questions that were beyond Penny's realm of understanding. These questions of culture, race, and poverty were dimensions of life that she had not previously considered, but now she saw were important. She would take these understandings into her college field experiences and her first teaching job in the urban context.

Beginning professional. After completing her rural field experiences, Penny entered her internship. The settings for her internship were in a middle school social studies classroom and an affluent elementary school. Once graduated, Penny sought employment, and her first job offer came from Johnson Elementary School. Taking a day to think about the possibility of teaching in the urban context, Penny accepted her first teaching assignment.

> *While I knew growing up I wanted to be a teacher, I'm not one of those people who knew that I wanted to work in the urban schools. It's not something that I intentionally said I don't want to do that. I grew up in a more affluent environment. I'd worked in all the nice rural schools, just wasn't something that I was like* [I] *want to go do this. When I first was applying for schools,* [Johnson] *was not something I considered 'cause I didn't think that this was the type of school I would be my best at.*

The following day, several employment offers came from other principals. Penny reflected on this occurrence as an act of fate that has bolstered her view of making the right choice.

> *I took a day to wait. I didn't tell her* [the principal] *the first day. I took a day to think about it. The day after, I got five phone calls from schools that I had first put stuff out to. So I thought that was strange. And I was like ok, that kinda tells me something. Maybe I really was meant to be there. And so then I got all excited.*

During Penny's first year, she learned many things about Johnson Elementary School through the dual roles of teacher and teacher leader. Inside her classroom, Penny learned about the needs of her students and classroom management strategies. As she recalled, the history of the school's discipline efforts had been inconsistent due to limited administrative support. Penny began to find ways to address behavior issues and to increase instructional time during the day as she built support with her teaching peers.

> *My first year, I had broken up fights in the classroom. I had horrible behavior issues. Kids* [were] *throwing desks and stuff. It really threw me and I was like, can I handle this? And then I realized that yes, I can handle it. I found the strategies. I asked people what to do.*

Outside her classroom, she had an opportunity that most new teachers never attained. A large teacher turnover took place at Johnson Elementary School that year. Three of the four teachers on her grade-level were first year teachers. The veteran teacher did not see herself as a leader and resigned by mid-year as grade-level chair. When turning in her resignation to the principal, she suggested Penny should assume that role because of her organizational skills and willingness to take on extra responsibilities. Penny was appointed to her first leadership role as grade-level chair.

> *I learned a lot about myself and how strong I was. And I really feel like this is where I was supposed to be. This helped me grow incredibly as a teacher and a teacher leader. I would not have had these experiences anywhere else. I may have had kids that sat in their seats and did what I asked them to do all day long, but I would not have grown to be the kind of leader that I am and will be in the future, I don't think. So really, I am glad I am here. I feel like I'm making the most difference that I can here. Cause I can see the growth.*

By mid-year, the school also saw a change in its instructional leadership as a new principal was assigned to the school. The new principal established a vision for the school that included attaining order, acquiring resources and raising expectations for student learning and teacher performance. Through this transition of instructional leadership, Penny remained in the role of grade-level chair and became active in raising her voice to share her and her team members' perspectives on the school's needs and governance. Penny also made her interests clear by voluntarily making herself available

for various after-school activities. By taking the initiative to share her interests, Penny asserted her desire to grow, lead and be an asset to the school.

> *I really try to seek out different opportunities to do stuff in the curriculum areas, leadership areas. I've served on some committees she's asked for volunteers. And so I really kinda sought those things out. I want to do it and I think that's something that's important.*

Teacher leadership. After her second year of teaching and with the encouragement of her principal, Penny decided to seek an advanced degree in educational administration. During the next two years, she logged over 700 hours of administrative internship activity as a requirement of her educational specialist degree.

> *For my third and fourth year teaching, I was going through the graduate program at* [the local university], *and we had to get a combined total of 500 hours those two years, 500 hours of internship with our principal. I ended up with about 700, more than that. I had quite a few roles those two years. I was a mentor teacher for interns from* [the local university], *half of the third and all of the fourth year. I was on the leadership team. I was grade-level chair both years. I coordinated volunteers. I was in charge of facility repair. I'm still taking on getting new playground equipment. The playground is something I'd started doing during the internship and we hadn't raised the money yet, so I'm still working on that.*

Penny discussed her administrative internship as an unforgettable experience. She reflected on the impact that this internship had on her overall leadership development. Penny contended that if she had not participated in the internship, she would have still sought out opportunities for leadership practice, but her level of confidence and quantity of experience would have been diminished.

> *I don't think my leadership abilities would have been as improved or as challenged maybe because I wouldn't have had the requirements to do that. So I probably would not have stepped up as much. I do believe that I would have still been able to have a leadership role in the school because I do seek them out, volunteer for committees, that kind of thing. But in*

> *terms of getting as many opportunities as I did, I would not have gotten those. I don't think I would have felt as confident in my abilities as a leader either.*

During the course of her administrative internship, Penny had several realizations about her leadership strengths and challenges. Reflecting on the two-year experience, Penny recalled with a sense of satisfaction some of her stronger traits such as mentoring, collaborating, and organizing that she has further developed. For example, Penny led intern meetings to explain various school procedures, policies, and documentation. These times provided an opportunity for interns to ask questions in an informal atmosphere in which they could gain a sense of issues from the standpoint of a classroom teacher.

> *I love getting to work with the interns because you know they're going to be future school leaders and getting time to mentor them, work with them, answer their questions, share tips, I really enjoy doing that.*

Working with grade-level peers, the school's leadership team, curriculum committees, volunteers, community members, administrators and interns, Penny has collaborated with a huge array of people inside and outside her building to address school needs. Her most frequent collaboration involved the people she worked most closely with, her grade-level team members. Daily interactions became a natural process, allowing team members to work, share ideas, utilize resources, and implement strategies.

> *Being willing to collaborate and share is huge. It just comes natural to us by now. I know I talked a lot about collaboration, but you know it's just natural to go and say, hey, what did you do to teach this? What really worked? I found this great activity. Would you like a copy of this? It's just completely natural.*

Penny's trait of being organized became ingrained early in her personal life. She transferred this habit into her professional life as grade-level chair by documenting events and keeping a calendar available for planning.

> *Being organized I think helps a lot and just so we're kinda on the same page or keep each other on the same page with what's going on. Usually I bring my calendar down to the meetings because I'm about what's going on. Communication goes along with the collaboration thing.*

In our interviews, Penny related that time management, flexibility, and thinking outside the box were the greatest challenges she faced in her administrative internship. In explaining her time management challenge, Penny reported that administrative duties sometimes took place outside her classroom. She conveyed her concern over the time spent on administrative duties versus the time she spent in teaching as she compared the first and second year of her internship.

> *I expect a lot of myself and* [the principal] *expects a lot of us too. And I want to do my absolute best at everything. And so sometimes trying to get everything done at the right time can be a little frustrating. Trying to get stuff done while teaching in the classroom at the same time could be extremely frustrating. The second year was a little bit better because I had my intern who was able to work in the classroom and I could go up* [to the office] *and do a lot of the stuff.*

Flexibility was another challenge identified by Penny as she has worked to become more adaptable. Acknowledging that this was an area she has improved, she still struggled with adjustments to meet students' needs or to realign her daily schedule according to administrative requirements. As a person who was comfortable with order and structure, Penny has worked to be open to the frequent changes an urban environment often presents.

> *I was not a very flexible person when I came into this. There's so many completely different things that you have to deal with every single day. And being able to deal with those things and hopefully do it right. I think being in this teaching environment* [urban] *helped me to learn to be flexible. Just being able to completely realize my kids are not getting this concept that I just knew they would get. I'm gonna have to change this around or they're having an awful day because they just found out their dad's going back to jail. As much as I want them to do this, it's not gonna happen today. We've got all sorts of crazy school-wide issues that might occur. Sometimes I'll take the first five minutes* [of the day] *and I'll be like, "Oh, gosh, I've got to change this." And then, I'll give myself that time and I'll make that change and I'm done. That's something that has improved, but I still gotta work on that.*

Penny's third area to strengthen was thinking outside the box. Her principal prodded her to think beyond her own classroom and grade-level and to expand her thinking to include various scenarios and perspectives of others. Readjusting her lens of understanding has given her practice in stepping outside her own perspectives to make more broad-based judgments.

> *You've really got to think about the whole school picture and that's something that* [my principal] *told me when I first started my internship. The ability to think outside the box and that's something that I had to practice.* [My principal] *gave me a lot of opportunities to practice thinking outside the box. 'Cause sometimes I can get focused on one little thing and, and go from there. So she really helped me to think about school-wide, instead of just my classroom. School – wide, even district -wide, and don't just take the first thing that comes to your head, specifically, coming up with different solutions.*

Maturing teacher. With her administrative specialist degree completed, Penny explained that her fifth and current year seemed anticlimactic in terms of her level of school responsibilities. Penny related how she regretted no longer being in the first wave of communication at the school and involved in the disbursement of information.

> *This year has almost been a step back in a way. Which even at the beginning of the year, I felt out of the loop cause I wasn't involved in all the stuff going on in the office. I'd be like wait, I don't know what's going on, but I got used to that.*

Her reduced leadership duties were largely due to her principal's practice of changing grade-level chairs to provide opportunities for a variety of individuals to be a part of the school leadership team. When I questioned her about her feelings regarding her old role, she was at first quiet and then explained her situation.

> *She* [the principal] *wanted to share the leadership. Give other people chances for leadership which she's done that. And through my grad school classes in leadership, that's one of the things they said, "Don't keep the same grade-level chairs." I knew why I wasn't grade-level chair, but it was still a little…well, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed being, I was going to say, in the know, but knowing what's going on and having a little bit more of a voice in what's going on. You know the grade-level chair gets to find out then let people know. As opposed to knowing at grade-level meetings, I'm just finding out.*

I continued to prompt her for an explanation, and Penny revealed deeper insight into her need to know and be a part of decision-making processes.

> *I really enjoy being able to help people. It's kinda like wanting to be a teacher, you usually help the students. And as a school leader, you help teachers find answers.*
>
> *It just makes me feel better about what I'm doing. I'm not just a little person being told what to do. I understand. I can connect it to everything. I don't want you to think that I'm one of those people that need to know everything so she can lord over everybody. I'm not like that. I just like to understand why we made this decision. Instead of just being told, "Here's what you're gonna do." Why do we need to do this*? *I guess just the fact that I've always been involved in that and was kinda thrown into a leadership position when I first came. It's the reason I continue to seek it out.*

Other duties such as grant writing, district literacy textbook training, and state assessment committee work have become new areas of leadership practice for Penny.

These activities have opened gateways to networking with larger groups of educators and have expanded her view of leadership in contexts beyond her school.

> *I wrote that* [playground] *grant in August of this year. I've written several and that one's one of the smallest I've written. I found out about the grant last year. We learned we could apply again and so we did, and we got that. I surveyed students and teachers, and figured out what we wanted in the playground equipment.* [I] *worked with them to design the playground equipment and got it approved through the administration.*

Her experience of working with the district literacy textbook training committee proved to be an exercise in the value of preparation and asserting her professional voice. Nominated by her building principal and selected by district administrators, Penny was the youngest person among 15 district trainers to create and implement professional development for the system's 150 elementary teachers.

> *I was definitely the youngest one there. There were four other classroom teachers. Everybody else was curriculum facilitators and literacy leaders who usually train. They* [the school system] *did this in lieu of getting textbook representatives. We sat in on those meetings and they would ask each other for suggestions, but there wasn't a lot of asking me for suggestions on how to do stuff. I had to really speak up to get my voice heard. And by the end of it, I had quite a few of them telling me how impressed they were with the training I did. The lady that I worked with closely, who was the head of our little team for the fourth grade training, said she felt like she was training with one of her curriculum facilitators. So I enjoyed that.*

When I asked Penny why she felt compelled to speak up and participate, she explained how she had reviewed and familiarized herself with the textbook and had gained confidence in her presentation skills due to the leadership opportunities she had in her school. Her broad grin and excited voice projected a sense of satisfaction and pride in her performance.

> *From the beginning, I really enjoyed the features that this textbook had. I felt like it was stuff that we could really use in the classroom to meet our students needs. So, I was comfortable with the textbook I wanted to get other people excited about how to use it in their classroom.* [The principal] *has had me speak at faculty meetings about things, leading new teacher meetings, meeting with the* [university] *interns, or leading leadership team meetings. It's not something that I would have done four or five years ago. I would not have thought I would be sitting up in front of a group of teachers doing that. So I was definitely nervous for a while.*

Her latest leadership activity, state assessment creation, gave her another experience to stretch the boundaries of her leadership skills. Retold with the same sense of satisfaction, she related how the need to understand the rationale behind decisions was motivation for her participation in this project.

> *Last year, I got the opportunity to go to* [the state capital] *and work with the state department* [of education] *on helping to design the* [state achievement] *test. And which, of course, I accepted. I just got back from this past week to doing it again this year. Just knowing the reasoning behind it. Here's how we select the passages. Here's the reason this passage is better. Here's the way we format the questions.*

Penny's shift in her roles has prompted her to change the focus of her leadership activities. Although she no longer served as a grade-level chair who bears the responsibility of sharing information at the school level, she has found other leadership avenues to explore beyond her school and local education agency.

Urban teacher leadership. Penny's understanding of leadership has been impacted by the models provided by the two principals she has worked with at Johnson Elementary School. Her first principal, whom she only worked with for one semester, hired her and helped her to settle into the school. Her second principal has offered her opportunity, encouragement, and support as a teacher and as a teacher leader.

> *She's very much been supporting all sorts of opportunities. Definitely I appreciate that. I mean she really lets us get involved in the leadership team in working on planning different areas of school. We get together and plan staff development. She asks for teachers' input. She just really encourages collaboration getting together and working in teams. So, that's something I really felt comfortable doing.*

Penny believed principals should implement practices to engage teachers to be contributing members of the learning community. She believed that knowing the strengths and weaknesses of all personnel in order to create a web of support was an important ability principals should bring to their leadership roles.

> *I think definitely the principal needs to be willing to encourage teacher leadership. They need to find teachers that fit in certain areas too. Look for the strengths in certain people. I know that in the future if I were to find myself in that position, I know what my strengths are. I would certainly know what my weaknesses are, too. I would look for people who could help me in those particular areas.*

Penny shows a tremendous amount of pride in discussing her school and the accomplishments of the faculty and leadership of Johnson Elementary School. As the first and only school in which she has been employed, Penny's perspective of urban schools has been molded primarily by this one context. Over the last five years, she has visited other urban schools, but according to Penny, Johnson Elementary School has held the standard by which urban schools should be judged.

In describing her interactions with veteran teachers when she first arrived at the school, many told Penny to get her time in and then transfer. This advice has remained with Penny over the course of her tenure at Johnson Elementary School. Three teachers who offered this advice garnered Teacher of the Year awards and immediately transferred

to other schools in the system. Having abandoned Johnson Elementary at the first opportunity, Penny and her peers felt insulted by the actions of these teachers.

> *When I first came to* [Johnson Elementary School] *I was told by teachers (who were excellent teachers) that I could stay at* [Johnson] *for two-three years and then transfer because if I could teach here, I could teach anywhere. I think often urban schools are starting points for young teachers who then transfer to an "easier" school environment. That is fine for them and for the teachers who gave me "pointers" at first, but they should not be put in a leadership position in that school. Of the five years I have been at* [Johnson Elementary School], *we have had five Teachers of the Year (a huge honor in* [our school system], *as it should be). Two of those were retiring teachers, which is fine, but three of those teachers transferred out of* [Johnson Elementary School] *immediately after receiving the award. I and others on staff who are committed to the school felt insulted at those actions (none of which were due to promotions or moves).*

Penny also shared her annoyance about the perceptions teachers from non-urban schools hold about their urban counterparts. According to Penny, many non-urban teachers have condemned urban schools without gaining first-hand knowledge of the dedicated teachers, limited resources, and the complex lives of students in urban contexts.

> *I get a little ticked off. I really want to just invite them to my school to say here look, come see. Come experience what we've got. And I also realize that quite a few of these people, not all of them obviously, but quite a few of them would not cut it here. They would not be able to handle the different environment that we're in and how hard that we work here to meet our students needs for them to be successful. They just would not manage to be successful here, not all of them. It makes me feel sad that they don't realize they don't know, but what students we've got and what resources they have that we don't have or we have to work really, really hard to get them. And just the lack of understanding, it upsets me very much.*

Penny believed that another important element of urban teacher leadership was the ability to share the good. Penny believes that in order to change the negative

perceptions in the community, it was imperative that the positive accomplishments of the school be broadcast. Everyone at the school has a responsibility of sharing the good.

> *I think getting our name out there is something big. Letting them know what our school's done. Let the community know what's happening.* [Johnson Elementary School] *has been in the paper several times. I've had a lot of people who don't work here, but know me, mention hey we saw your principal's award or saw your school in the paper for making the gains. That's awesome! I think talking it up is something that they need to be aware of. Like I said, people don't often know what's happening at the urban schools.*

For Penny, the administration, faculty, staff, students and families of Johnson Elementary School have worked extremely hard to achieve improved student performance and a renewed sense of accomplishment. Assessing each student's capabilities and identifying individual learning needs, Penny believed Johnson has been able to assist students more effectively. Penny perceived herself to be part of this improvement process.

> *I've had parents tell me I cannot believe how much better they're doing at* [Johnson Elementary School] *than they were at this other school. And I really feel like it's the fact that we recognize what they* [students] *need. I've seen that happen so many times that the kids move in from a suburban school and their grades shoot up. It's not because we're ballooning the grades or whatever. It's just that they're getting the help they need.*

During our last interview as we were finishing our conversation regarding leadership activities and professional development, Penny made a comment that I could not ignore. In questioning her further, I learned that her whole professional life was about to take a new direction. She appeared to be very happy about her announcement.

> *I got a new job! I'm gonna be classified as a mentor teacher and there's mentor teachers and there's master teachers that they select. I will be at a middle school, so I will teach two middle school sixth grade language arts*

> *classes during the day. And the rest of the day, I will be working administrative duties. One of the big things is evaluating other teachers.*

Penny was excited at the prospect of moving into a quasi-administrative role. She would be returning to a school where she completed part of her student teaching requirements, as well as moving into a supervisor/evaluator role. Penny's move into a new job seemed a natural course for her. She was a hard worker who, over the course of the last five years, has had practice in making decisions and leading within her school and classroom contexts. Penny considered her professional future with caution, but also expressed a desire to build upon her leadership resume'.

> *I feel that I am very responsible and I enjoy being able to take on more of the responsibilities. I enjoy being able to make more decisions. I'd like to get some experience in other things before going into that* [administrative] *field. You know in my organized head I have timeframes, but I'm afraid to discuss it* [moving into administration] *out loud like that.*

Conclusion. Penny was a teacher and a teacher leader. Her passion for teaching and her desire to contribute to decisions have already led her to several leadership opportunities in her brief career. Penny's eagerness to accept new challenges and to excel advanced her professional trajectory. Her sense of order and structure, tempered with caution, contributed toward her thoughtful demeanor as a teacher leader.

Unlike other teacher leaders who perceived themselves as career classroom teachers, Penny aspired to stretch her leadership skills to become an administrator. Her teacher leadership role has allowed her to bridge her passion of teaching with decision-making activities associated with leadership. Although she realized she has much experience to gain prior to seeking out such a position, she was confident that a formal leadership path was meant for her.

Case Analysis

Introduction. Penny's experience at Johnson Elementary School has shaped her professional view of urban schools over the last five years. Her understanding of the complexities of urban schools has been influenced by her non-urban preparation experiences and the leadership style of a young principal who has been driven by performance standards and student achievement results.

Penny's analytical and methodical approach to life contributed to her ability to think ally when planning and engaging in school activities. The report of this analysis addresses these and other themes that emerged from the data and examine in detail Penny's role identities of teacher and teacher leader as they are viewed through the theoretical lenses of this study.

Role identity. ***Penny was a collaborator.*** Penny's experiences with collaboration began even before she graduated from high school. Noting her experiences in babysitting, working with children through church activities and assisting peers and family members with school work, Penny's early collaboration influenced her future work as a teacher. One of her most powerful experiences regarding collaboration occurred in high school. Recalling that her French and English teachers allowed her to team-teach with them, Penny enjoyed pooling time and resources with her instructors. This collaboration affirmed her desire to teach and made her aware of the significance of teamwork in the classroom.

> *In both of those cases they knew that's* [teaching] *what I wanted to do. They were encouraging me along that path.*

These high school teaching experiences gave Penny the opportunity to collaborate with her teachers to learn about instruction. Penny's learning experiences connect with Frost and Durrant's (2002) affirmation of collaboration as a professional learning strategy.

Another instance of Penny's exposure and involvement with collaboration came about during her first year of teaching. Out of necessity as a first year teacher, Penny and other new teachers within her school banded together to locate instructional materials and learn how to best address student behavior challenges. Penny related that the search for assistance warranted no sense of embarrassment for herself or for her peers.

> *I was lucky that we had several teachers who were brand new like me and were experiencing the same issues. We could talk to teachers that had been here for years and while some of them shared stories that weren't helpful, others said well this is something that I tried that worked.* [I] *teamed up with some teachers for teacher swap instead of having to write them* [students] *up constantly. We were ready to ask for help and, it* [asking for help] *wasn't something you felt like you were gonna be looked down on if you did it.*

In examining this previous example of collaboration through the lens of distributive leadership, spontaneous collaboration best exemplifies this form of collective effort. Gronn (2002) defines spontaneous collaboration as impromptu effort by a group of teachers through which a problem is resolved. Reacting out of a perceived need to influence their work environment, Penny and her grade-level peers sought assistance to address student behavior issues and a lack of materials. The new teachers took initiative to identify common needs and collaborated to find solutions. Their actions were not contrived or directed by administrative mandates, as defined by institutionalized practice. Their process was organic and spontaneous in meeting their immediate need to locate resources.

Over time, working with others and seeking out information became a natural process that was encouraged by her new principal. As explained by Penny, the daily interactions and the pooling of resources proved to be a positive process that has enabled her and her grade-level peers to exert collective effort in carrying out instructional tasks.

> *When* [the principal] *came in, she really encouraged collaboration… getting together and working in teams. So, that's something I really felt comfortable doing. It just comes natural to us by now. I know I talked a lot about collaboration, but it's just natural to go and say, hey, what did you do to teach this? What really worked? I found this great activity. Would you like a copy of this? It's just completely natural. Being willing to collaborate and share is huge.*

Not viewed as an orchestrated effort, this natural process has what Harris and Muijs (2005) describe as dynamic interrelations that create catalysts for change. Through their daily interactions, this grade-level team brought about growth in their own professional understandings, while advancing instructional goals for students. Fullan (1993) contends that actions of teachers to promote change are a distinctive characteristic that sets them apart as leaders.

Penny was a teacher. As Penny collaborated with peers, she extended her teaching practices to influence adults. Through her interactions with colleagues, Penny demonstrated her ability to effectively communicate and teach other teachers in informal and formal capacities. Penny's early experiences in her work in church, as a babysitter, and in high school classes gave her practice as a teacher. During her first year as an educator, Penny worked to educate herself and teach her peers to implement effective behavior strategies and locate resources. When Penny was selected at mid-year to assume a grade-level chair position, she was assigned a formal role to coordinate grade-

level efforts. Over the course of time, she has had a great deal practice teaching other teachers about classroom management and curricular strategies.

In curricular matters, Penny has had opportunities to mentor fellow teachers. Across grade-levels, she has worked to share instructional techniques and grouping routines with other teachers. Penny believed she has made a difference through sharing with other teachers her knowledge and classroom successes.

> *I worked with some new fifth grade teachers who were gonna be teaching social studies my first year of my [administrative] internship. And I also worked with third grade* [teachers] *on some social studies skills and ended up getting them involved in a big social studies training that I had done several years ago. They went through that and loved it. It's really, you could even tell the students coming up to our fourth grade how much better they're doing in social studies skills; hopefully from that, that I've passed on to them. So that's one thing I've done.*

As a result of this collaboration, when the third grade students transitioned into her fourth grade classroom, she believed she could see a difference in students' learning in comparison to previous students' performance. She reflected that her willingness to share enriched teachers' practices and enhanced students' learning. Penny was able to see tangible results of her involvement as a teacher.

In another example of her role as a teacher, Penny has been observed by other teachers demonstrating small group management skills. Not only did Penny model the facilitation of the grouping strategy, but she also took time from her schedule to debrief with teachers to review the strategies and to clarify remaining questions they had.

> *I've had some teachers sent to my room to observe small groups and how small groups were ran in my room. Then I met with them afterwards to explain here's how this worked. Here's how I set this up. So that's one thing that they've' done, but I can't recall formal meetings. I've presented*

> *stuff at faculty meetings. She's* [the principal] *had me done that which was a little intimidating at first.*

Penny's commitment (Stryker & Serpe, 1982) to her role as a teacher was a long-standing one. Demonstrated through informal teaching examples throughout her life (babysitting, high school peers and co-workers), Penny's commitment to her teaching role suggested that it was highly placed in her hierarchy of roles. In a similar fashion, Penny's commitment to her role as a leader was also a high priority. In maintaining both of these roles, Penny demonstrated what Stryker (1980) contends is an ability to negotiate situational overlap. Burke (2006) suggests that salience of roles and commitment level predict the behavior associated with a chosen role. For Penny, her primary role can be interpreted as that of a teacher first and then a leader. Penny exhibited no role disturbance (Burke, 2006) due to the interplay of these two roles in her professional life. Her ability to shift perspectives between teacher and teacher leader to meet situational needs suggests her comfort to transitioning between roles.

Penny was a mentor. Penny also accepted the role as a formal mentor to university pre-service teachers. As part of her experience with them, she formalized intern cohort meetings to provide a safe space for interns to ask questions and explore the nuances of school operations and expectations for instruction. This time proved to be fulfilling for Penny as she experienced a sense of helping and accomplishment.

> *At our intern meetings (one of the things I did for my* [administrative] *internship) is we would have intern meetings every other week and then it ended up being once a month toward the end of the year. They would pull out notepads, start writing down notes, I think that's a big deal. So I just feel like I had lots to share with them.*

Penny's enactment of the mentor role affirms Blank and Kershaw's (2009) belief that mentoring promotes learning. As she assisted teachers in acclimating to the profession, Penny acted as a facilitator to teachers' discovery of expectations and instructional needs. Penny understood the power of mentoring. Penny's depth of caring and willingness to commit time were two important factors that provided the foundations for her role as a mentor. Through her caring she was willing to share practices. Because she viewed mentoring as a priority, she budgeted her time to integrate guiding and sharing with others. As a result of Penny's experiences with mentoring, she has a clear understanding of the importance of working together to raise the professional knowledge base in her school, which directly impacts the overall learning of students.

Through Penny's roles of collaborator, teacher, and mentor, she has supported others' efforts to improve practice and gain knowledge. Penny has encouraged the work of others while advancing her own understandings of school work. Further evidence of Penny linking with others is presented in the next section.

Distributed leadership. ***Participation is a responsibility of everyone.***

Referencing the expectations of her principal for the last four and a half years, Penny has seen the power of decision-making when all faculty members have become involved. Penny recognized the importance of ownership for teachers when she stated, "We feel like we have a part in it." According to Penny, her principal has solicited participation from all faculty and staff members to foster ownership and promote a collective vision of the faculty. Behar-Horenstein and Amatea (1996) contend that the removal of the onus of authority and incorporation of decision-making among greater numbers of individuals

creates a sense of buy-in. Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, and Hopkins (2007) suggest that a collective vision promotes a participative leadership model. Through these participative leadership practices, the principal promoted a school climate in which Penny has been encouraged to collaborate.

> *She* [Johnson Elementary School principal] *asks for teachers' input. There's all sorts of things that she wants our input on to make sure that our teachers are feeling encouraged. We feel like we have a part in it. And not just teacher leaders, but just even the teachers who want to step back and coast she still wants them to be involved. And I think that's something that administrators definitely need to encourage.*

Through Penny's collaboration efforts, she has sought to include others in decision-making processes and various activities. Penny learned the importance of seeking out others by commenting that, "You make too many decisions on your own, doesn't go over well." Penny shared her insight on this issue.

> *I found in my own experience that it helped to get feedback from other leaders on how they thought a certain decision would be perceived by the rest of the staff.*

Penny's awareness of the importance of including others in decision-making processes was connected to her role-taking ability. As Mead (1934), Stryker (1962), and Schwalbe (1988) contend, role-taking is the capacity of an individual to take on the perspectives of others. Penny's experiences as a decision-maker have enabled her to practice reflecting on the various perspectives of individuals who may be affected by her decisions. Learning that input is important as she has broadened her role-taking capacity, Penny's leadership skills have been strengthened.

Penny's leadership team experience has provided a more formalized way to collaborate, thus equalizing decision-making and workload at Johnson Elementary

School. Gronn (2002) categorizes formal leadership procedures of a contrived team as an *institutionalized practice.* Unlike spontaneous collaboration that has been previously mentioned, institutionalized practice is a formal means of networking in which set protocols and expectations shape and mold the activities of participants. The results of participants' interactions are the outcome of the group's leadership decisions. Penny has learned that decision-making requires a balance of judgment and that not all decisions should or can be made by a small group. Serving on the leadership team has given Penny practice in making judgments about whether decision-making situations call for the engagement of a small group or the whole faculty.

> *In our school we like to have a lot of discussion and get other opinions. So, there are just some things you've obviously got to say, this is how it's gonna be. But, there are certain … and the ability to figure out which things it is that I needed to say, which things we needed to get a consensus on. That's how I think the leadership team has grown in the past three years or so because that's where we really take things for discussion.*

Her time on this committee gave Penny practice in discerning between such circumstances and made her more thoughtful in considering others' perspectives.

Teacher leadership. ***Because of a willingness to learn, leadership experiences were made available*****.** Throughout the interviews, Penny described her efforts to seek out information to improve her own practice and students' learning opportunities. Her desire to learn was viewed as a means for professional enhancement, and it was complemented with follow-up activities of sharing knowledge with her peers. Penny's efforts of learning and sharing created a looping process. As an active partner (Johnson, 1990) in her school context, Penny asserted:

> *Teacher leaders can't stay in their own classrooms. They can't stay in here with their door shut. They can be excellent teachers, but that's not necessarily a teacher leader. And so I think that's something definitely that I do. I'm out of my classroom working with different things. And working on, talking about the school culture being positive and successful, working to make our school a success.*

Penny's understanding of curriculum has deepened. In analyzing the primary grades' incorporation of new curriculum strategies, she has continued to progress in her understanding of curriculum and instruction. This new understanding has given her a more sense of the impact all grades have on instruction.

> *When we brought in the Reading First grant that first year,* [that] *was my second year of teaching. It kinda almost went over my head in a way. It was for K-3. We* [fourth grade teachers] *didn't know as much about it because we felt upper grades… what's going on? Here's what we need to do in fourth grade to help with that grant. Here's what it's gonna do for us. Here's what we need to do to teach our kids and do better with reading. And I really learned a ton, a ton about reading instruction. Got a lot of help, got a lot of reading materials, professional development through that.*

Penny shared that her work with a system-wide textbook committee and state curriculum standards committees were examples of her growth in professional development. These experiences were additional evidence of her ability to look at a scope of interrelated material to see an overall vision.

During the time of these interviews, Penny had limited responsibilities outside of her professional life, and she enjoyed the flexibility of attending many professional development meetings.

> *I've gotten involved with several different trainings that* [the principal] *asked for volunteers. She knows that I'm available and would like to do it. I signed up for a couple of different trainings for the summer that I don't have to do, but it's something that I want to go ahead and do.*

Since Penny had the luxury of time, she was willing to focus her informal learning on curricular matters, while simultaneously choosing to seek an advanced degree in educational administration. As a degree requirement, Penny completed a 500-hour administrative internship. Because of all her previous work and preparation, she stepped into leadership tasks and began to extend her learning in the role of an aspiring administrator.

Supportive administrators provided opportunities for teacher leaders. Penny saw the influence of her principal as vital to her development as a teacher leader. Penny acknowledged that her principal played a critical role by presenting her with opportunities inside and outside the classroom that have shaped her learning as a teacher and a teacher leader. As a specific example, the principal at Johnson Elementary School assigned Penny and her grade-level team to mentoring a third grade team in the area of math instruction.

> *We worked with the third grade teachers on how we did the grouping for math, flexible grouping and changing classes for math. And I believe this year was the first year, they tried a little bit last year, and this year is the first year they full out did that. And they came to us several times to find out how we worked, what did we do? So that's something. We could have been excellent fourth grade teachers, and said yea it works ok. But we became teacher leaders and said here's how we structured it. Here's the way we grouped our kids. Here's what we did if a kid needs to be moved, that kind of thing.*

Although the administrative internship was a framework for some leadership opportunities, Penny's experiences prior to and after the completion of the internship indicated that her principal consistently assigned leadership tasks to her; the internship

only advanced the amount and speed of tasks assigned. Penny's decision to attain a leadership degree was supported by her principal as well.

> *She's* [the principal] *very much been supporting encouraging, all sorts of opportunities. Definitely I appreciate that. She's the one that encouraged me to go into that particular* [leadership] *program too.*

In addition to school level opportunities, Penny's principal has provided experiences for Penny at the system and state levels. Penny served on a system-wide professional development initiative to train other teachers in the use of a new textbook series. Penny was also nominated by her principal to serve on a state-wide assessment committee. On this committee, Penny was exposed to school personnel from across the state and was engaged in making decisions regarding testing content. The quality of Penny's work was evidenced by an invitation for her to participate a second year on the state assessment committee.

Discussing her principal further, Penny expressed her appreciation that her principal delegated tasks so that Penny experienced responsibilities associated with school leadership. Penny recognized the authority her principal gave her. These experiences provided by the principal demonstrated confidence and trust in Penny's abilities to execute tasks appropriately and efficiently.

> *She wants to make sure things get done the right way. I know it took a lot for her to let me take over different things. So that was a big responsibility for me to know that she could probably do a better job of doing this, but she's letting me have the opportunity to try my hand at these different things.*

Smylie (1992a) researched the process of decision-making between teacher leaders and principals. Findings of his study indicated that teacher leaders who have

collaborative and supportive relationships with their principals experienced greater opportunities to participate in school decision-making processes. Miles, Saxl, and Lieberman (1986) reported that building trust and rapport contributes to building collegiality. Penny's experience with her principal mirrored the findings of both of these studies. Through Penny's first year grade-level chair appointment, she was able to work more closely with her principal. Over time as grade-level chair, Penny demonstrated her abilities, which led to increased responsibilities from her principal. As a result of this, her principal encouraged her to pursue an advanced educational leadership degree, which led to even more responsibilities as part of her course requirements. Penny's decision-making skills would not be as advanced if not for the support and trust her principal gave her. Penny's relationship with her principal provided pivotal experience in developing important leadership skills.

Urban teacher leadership. ***Bracketing roles is a strategy to protect against emotional challenges.*** Penny confided that she was not immune to the emotional challenges of her students' lives; but she is careful to remain focused on her role as their teacher. Describing her natural disposition as "aloof," Penny inferred that she was not a trained as a counselor and did not feel qualified to address her students' social-emotional concerns, only their learning needs. Bracketing her emotions and remaining intent on her classroom goals has been a strategy that she has maintained as an urban teacher.

> *I could spend every single minute of the day talking one-on-one with my kids. Counseling them about what's happening in their lives. I don't feel I'm as qualified for that for one thing and there's people here who are, but that's not what we're necessarily here for. Some of the stories that the kids tell me about what's happening in their home life… it's something that I try to stay kind of detached from it. That's kind of my personality*

> *anyway, but if you let these things really affect you, you would spend 24 hours a day out buying stuff for these kids. I'll do what I can, and I certainly have done what we can, but you gotta draw a line somewhere. Trying to contact people to help them and get them out of situations and stuff. I mean you would just be in tears constantly, but I think some things that have really shaken me is just hearing what did you do last night. Well, here's what I did last night. Or yea, I didn't get my homework done and here's why and here's the proof and it's just really….it still affects me a lot.*

Penny has separated her own emotions from her students' challenges (Hochschild, 1983; 1990). However, she did not ignore her students' needs in dealing with their life challenges. Not excusing students from work, Penny contended that their need to process their life difficulties and decompress from the emotional strain was available in a designated area in the classroom.

> *I've got a place in my classroom that they can go, if they just need to lie down, if they want to write or draw a little picture about something that's happened. That's something that we do.*

Proclaiming positive school outcomes is necessary to counter negative urban school perceptions. Penny shared that she worked toward contributing to a "school culture being positive and successful." She asserted that one of the many ways urban teacher leaders must help their schools was by acting as public relations agents.

> *There've been positive things with our school. Making the gains and that's come out and her,* [the principal]*, getting that out to the community. Letting them know here's what our school's done. They've got to be a public relations agent. Just getting people aware of what we are doing at* [Johnson]*. What is positive. getting them involved if possible to come out and see what we've got going on.*

As a public relations agent, Penny believed that sharing the good and lifting up the constructive aspects of schools can help change the negative perception that has existed for so long. Opening communications and educating the public using the local media has

been an asset for Johnson Elementary School. Penny also related how she has been involved in spreading the good news about the achievement gains her school has made and the turnaround efforts that are in progress.

> *I think getting our name out there is something big. Getting us in the little weekly papers and that kind of thing. Here are some events that are going on. Trying to let the community know what's happening.* [Johnson]*'s been in the paper several times for having our name out there. I've had a lot of people who don't work at* [Johnson], *but know me, who've mentioned, hey we saw your principal or saw your school in the paper. That's awesome. I think kind of talking it up is something that they need to get aware of. Like I said, people don't often know what's happening at the urban schools.*

Another aspect that was important to changing the negative reputations of urban schools was the ability to include parents and community members. Penny credited her principal for starting this trend when she first came to Johnson. Since the incorporation of more inclusive communication, Penny expressed how the school has worked to change its perception and better serve students and parents.

> *I think it's very important to listen to their* [parent] *concerns. I think listening to their concerns and hearing what the perception is in the community and I think that is something that the administration did. When we really started working to change and presenting them with ideas about here's what we are doing to help hopefully correct this issue. Here are some things that are going on. Some of them were certainly being very positive about what was happening in the school if they asked about it or not.*

Penny described the changes that were made in providing better communication to community members and parents as a result of leadership change at Johnson Elementary School. From these changes, Penny believed that more positive working relationships had been established. The improved communication process contributed to the overall turnaround efforts the school experienced during Penny's tenure.

Conclusion. Penny was a young teacher who had strong leadership, teaching, collaborative, and mentoring skills. Evidence from this analysis of narrative indicated that she has an inclination to support distributed leadership approaches due to her ability to collaborate and her willingness to share decision-making. Her strength as a teacher leader was based upon her willingness to change to meet the needs of her context by seeking out learning opportunities and sharing with others. As an urban teacher, she has resolved to shield herself from the challenges of her students' lives by bracketing her interactions so that she remains focused upon teaching. Penny has worked to spread positive information regarding Johnson Elementary School in an effort to diffuse negative perceptions held in the community. Her role as a teacher leader has afforded her experiences to grow as a leader and prompted her to assert her role as a leader in and beyond her school and district context. Her primary role as a teacher supported her role as a teacher leader.

Joan, The Negotiator

Narrative

Introduction. Joan was a veteran urban teacher leader who was committed to her students, intolerant of incompetence, and direct in expressing herself. Although education was a second career for Joan, she seemed to be moving toward teaching all her life. Raised in a family of educators, Joan resisted all the interest inventories and career assessments that pointed her toward teaching. It would only be after having her social conscience pricked with newspaper stories touting low student achievement levels and voluntarily working with young children of various socio-economic backgrounds that she came to realize she could make a difference by becoming a teacher. Her time had come.

At the time of this study, Joan was in her tenth year of teaching. Hailing from the northeastern United States, she brought a different cultural and professional perspective to the voices in this study. Seeing her journey to education as a self-discovery process, Joan shared her beliefs and convictions with confidence. Because of her business experience as a mediator between managers and vendors, Joan had a unique perspective on education. Her sense of efficiency and frustration were noted by her discussion of the tolerance she believed public schools have exhibited in retaining substandard teachers.

> *I firmly believe if public schools were run like a private business, there would not be as many problems and there wouldn't be as many disruptive teachers.*

Joan described substandard teachers as "disruptive" due to inconsistencies she saw in their professional practice. These inconsistent practices, in turn, created ripple effects that were counterproductive to the learning and teaching process. According to Joan, this made the school context even more complex and difficult to negotiate. Her contention that public schools should be run like business enterprises was linked to high standards of performance, not just for students, but for teachers and administrators as well.

Through the course of five interviews, Joan described her educational journey and the leadership roles she has played along the way. Joan's classroom was the setting for four of the five interviews of this study. The last interview was conducted on the university campus. Joan preferred the interviews to be held after school hours in the quiet of her warmly lit, well-organized classroom.

Early life. Joan grew up in the northeastern United States. She was the third of five children, and her parents were both educators. She believed her birth order as the

middle child required her to be the peacekeeper and negotiator in her family. The age span of her siblings provided a safe environment in which to practice her communication and negotiation skills with people of various ages.

> *I am the middle child out of five. I'm a big one into birth order and I think that fits that middle child syndrome. (Laughter). I've had to play peacemaker. I want the peacefulness, to help everybody and to be happy. I have a sister that's quite a bit younger than I am, and she was basically raised by her older siblings because of nine years age difference. Then I have a younger brother that's two and a half years younger than me. Then my next sister above me is five years, then two and a half years. So, it's spread out over a span of 16 years from the oldest to the youngest.*

Not only were Joan's parents educators, but her extended family was immersed in the profession. Her aunts, uncles, and cousins included teachers and school administrators. Joan described her father's recount of a family photograph that demonstrated the extent to which her family was involved in education.

> *My mom taught severely retarded. My dad taught grades from junior high all the way up through college. There are teachers and principals and everybody. There's quite a bit in my family that went into education. My dad even has an old picture of a schoolhouse and he can point out all my ancestors, aunts and uncles, cousins, who were part of the schoolhouse or going to the school or teaching at the school. So it's quite a bit of history in my family.*

When speaking of her parents' influence, Joan described how her mother and her father's actions modeled teacher behavior in their daily lives. As a former special education teacher turned homemaker, Joan's mother modeled behavior strategies and her love of reading in the home environment. Her dad discussed his enthusiasm for teaching and invited her into his college classrooms.

> *Her influence was more at home in the way that she dealt with us and read with us when we were younger. My dad's influence came when he was a professor at the college. I would go to classes with him every once in a*

> *while and sit in classes and just watch and go to his office with him. From a child's perspective, it was really cool to see my dad and to see all these big kids listening to him. I think that's probably what I remember the most is watching all these people listen to him and learn from him. My dad often talked about stuff he did with his classes with me, even as a young kid. He would say, "Oh I…" He would recommend a book because he did it with his class of seventh graders or something like that. So I was surrounded by that environment for many, many years.*

Joan's parents also influenced their children through exposure to diverse populations. Joan had opportunities to interact with people from different countries as her family lived abroad for a year and welcomed several exchange students into their home. Living in Great Britain for a year, Joan was exposed to a different culture and way of life. In her American home, foreign exchange students shared their cultures over a period of nearly twenty years.

> *Growing up I had a diverse cultural upbringing and I've lived in another country. Yes, it was just England, but there's still a big diversity in the culture even between the two countries. We had AFS* [American Field Service] *students growing up from different countries. We hosted a woman from Iceland one year, and another one from the Netherlands, Japan, Japan a couple of years. We had somewhat of diversity over a period of sixteen, seventeen years.*

Although schooling and education were presented as positive by her parents and family, Joan's personal learning experiences were often challenging. As a child who "struggled really hard" in school, it was easy for Joan to empathize with students who also labored in the learning process. Through these experiences, Joan learned how to seek assistance and to network with others to meet her learning needs.

> *When I was a child, I struggled really hard in school. So I had to ask for help all the time. I've always been taught to go ask for help when I needed it. When I asked for it at home or school, I wasn't told to go away and I wasn't told maybe later and it was forgotten.*

Outside of school, Joan had many experiences working with children. As a young teenager, Joan began babysitting for other teachers' children and for families who vacationed in her area. Some of her positions turned into summer-long nanny assignments.

> *I babysat from about the age of 13 on up. I did babysit quite a few children. Whether it was children from people that just came up, cause the area I lived in had a lot of summer residents. Sometimes I'd do nanny work or long term babysitting jobs with children that came up for the summer. I'd babysit teachers' children that type of thing.*

As an older teenager, Joan's leadership skills began to emerge as she coordinated safety programs and Girl Scout Brownies' activities. Visiting elementary classrooms, Joan organized and presented safety programs to assist children in making healthy choices. Using puppets as an education tool, Joan enjoyed the experiences of teaching young children. She also assisted in leading a local Brownie pack.

> *I have quite a bit of experience as far as my high school years. I did certain programs. I did this one program with puppets where we would go into first grade classrooms and teach them about good touches, bad touches, about safety measures, about diabetes and good health. Just different things like that. I really enjoyed doing that and getting with the kids. I was good at it. In fact, they asked me back several years in a row to do it. I also helped run a brownie group when I was a senior in high school.*

As Joan contemplated college during her junior and senior years of high school, teaching was not a profession that she was ready to consider. Instead, Joan reflected on this period of her life as a phase of self-discovery.

> *When I was 18, 17, I started looking at colleges. I was in denial* [about considering teaching as a career]. *It was developing over time. You take those tests in college and say what you'd be good at. They said I'd be good at teaching. And I was like, I don't want to be a teacher. I didn't want to do that. So I went into something else for a few years. I think it's*

> *something I had to develop on my own. I don't think it was family influence as much as the self-discovery. I had to decide for myself what type of person I was gonna be as an adult and where I wanted my focuses and how to attain those focuses and those goals.*

Joan's nine-year journey of self-discovery led her to three degrees, several temporary jobs in the business world, and a four-year stint in corporate America before she sought a place in education. Her work in the corporate world was a string of temporary jobs that eventually led to her position as a marketing representative for a large national company. In this job, she spent four years assisting managers in negotiations with vendors for product pricing and product placement.

> *I started out in business, and more specifically, the marketing and management side of business. I had several different jobs. I did temp jobs until* [Corporation] *hired me. I worked for about four years in* [Corporation's] *marketing department. I didn't get management training within* [Corporation] *because my position was more of a communicator. The position I had at* [Corporation] *was more teaching store managers how to deal with vendors and teaching them what the products needed to look like and where they needed to go. I was often the one called in to help work out problems and iron out wrinkles and make sure things were running smoothly. And so mine was more of a communication, organization type role.*

During her time in the business world, Joan increasingly realized that business did not offer her contentment. She began reconsidering her career and life options.

> *I wasn't happy in what I was doing in the business world and I think if there had been something in the business world that would've made me happy, I wouldn't have left it.*

Not sure of her path at first, Joan soon realized that a long-term interest in psychology would be an area to explore. She decided she would return to school for a degree in psychology. It was at this time that she began to volunteer at the local children's hospital. Her volunteer time proved to be the spark that would lead her back to education.

> *I made a decision to go back and at the time I wasn't completely sure what I wanted to go back for, but I knew I wanted to go back for something. I wanted more schooling. I knew it was going to be something with psychology. I just didn't know which road to take. I was also volunteering at the children's hospital at the time and that interest started to grow.*

Joan's volunteer experiences afforded her chances to interact with children. Noticing the discrepancies in the children's reading skills, Joan began to question other learning irregularities she observed.

> *The volunteer job was actually to push around the toy cart. There were books and all sorts of stuff on the toy cart. So I had a lot of contact with the children in the hospital. And I got a sense of what was happening. You could see the ones who were non-readers and the ones who were readers. And I started to question, well this child is nine years old and this other child is nine years old, why aren't they both reading at the same level? I started to recognize a lot of those problems.*

Joan continued to think about these irregularities as she volunteered in an urban church. Assisting with the church's Vacation Bible School program, she worked with a diverse population of children from area homeless shelters who were interspersed with children of the church's parishioners. Joan noticed a disparity in academic skill levels and was bothered again by the academic gaps of similar-aged children. From her realizations, Joan concluded that the discrepancy in the children's learning was based upon their socio-economic backgrounds.

> *The awareness came when I started to get involved with the children's hospital and then I would also be involved with the church which is downtown around the rescue ministry. They do a vacation bible school and the children from the shelters come up and participate. I would help out with that. I think seeing those children mixed in with the children from the more affluent families and looking at the education gaps and that type of thing--those things started to disturb me and just reading the newspaper and seeing what was happening with education.*

Joan believed she had a responsibility to give back to her community. Because of this realization, Joan gradually made the decision to turn to education as a career. During the time when she made the decision to attain her teaching credentials, Joan continued to work full-time and did volunteer work during her free time.

> *Just being with children and working with them and seeing a need out there for good educators, I wanted that challenge to become a good educator. There was probably about a two and a half year break between my business degree and when I went back to school to for my education degree. I worked for* [Corporation] *while I was at* [the local university].

Summarizing her process, Joan exuded confidence and pleasure as she smiled while relating her final thoughts about her route to becoming a teacher.

> *I don't think I chose it. I think it chose me because I went into another profession to begin with and then I decided through the course of understanding myself that I wanted to become a teacher. I was 27 by the time I got my masters* [degree] *in education. I think just in that capacity, my job led me to really realize that I had gone back to school for the right profession and that was teaching.*

Beginning professional. Joan's internship year gave her practice and preparation prior to the commencement of her career as a teacher. Joan's awareness of quality teaching became heightened as she paid close attention to various aspects of school life and the styles of teaching she observed during her internship. Using observation as a tool to discern teacher qualities she wanted to adopt, Joan recalled her analysis process from that year.

> *I watched the dynamics and noticed teachers who were rising to the top. They were becoming leaders in their profession and the ones that were getting the interns. I watched them and started to compare them to the teachers that might not have been on that scale. I'm big into watching and trying to analyze what's going on. I started to see if I wanted to take this road and be that effective teacher that hopefully one day can help other teachers also become effective. I started to look at a lot of that when I was*

> *in my internship year and look at the qualities of these teachers and which ones were being successful and how were they being successful and when were they being successful.*

Identifying her mentor as a strong teacher, Joan was able to take away from this experience professional strategies and techniques that she would later use in her own suburban and urban classrooms. Recognizing the need for structure and a well-managed classroom, Joan found behavior management strategies to be the foundation of a productive classroom.

> *I had a very good mentoring teacher during my internship year. I do recall the reason why my mentor teacher was so successful was because of the structure in her classroom. The way she went over everything step by step, giving her expectations, having procedures, training the children to do it. I noticed that other teachers that were successful were doing similar things. I noticed that having a loud voice in the classroom was not always the best thing and that often the students didn't respond. You could have the loudest voice possible, but your students might still be off the wall. I started to look at what teachers were doing to keep kids calm, especially the kids who have ADHD, ADD, and all the other things that can cause a child to be hyper.*

Once finished with her internship and having the credentials to teach, Joan sought out her first teaching job. Understanding that she had limited networking contacts, Joan aggressively applied for various elementary teaching jobs and was able to secure an interim position in an affluent elementary school.

> *Being a new face to this area and having no prior contacts in the education field, you just have to get your foot in the door and that's basically what I did. I put my application in everywhere and just took what was given to me first and luckily* [Barton Elementary School] *was the first job that was given to me. As a first year teacher, it was a very good experience for me. I didn't have any behavior problems. The only thing I had to really concentrate on was getting the curriculum down and organizing my classroom.*

In her first assignment, Joan was frightened. Here she was in her empty second grade classroom, and she did not know what to do. With only three days before students would report, Joan had the daunting task of setting up her classroom for the first time. As a person who hated to fail, Joan thought carefully about her task. With determination, she relied upon her internship experiences and prepared her room with thoughtful consideration.

> *I was really starting off with an empty classroom. The first thing I realized was that I needed to have this classroom ready before those kids walked in and I had three days to get it ready. So that was the first challenge. (Laughter). The only clue I had use was based off my internship experience which luckily was a good experience. I had some foundation and I could start planning. I probably spent the first day, first five hours, in that classroom just staring at it because I was just scared. I didn't know, and that was probably the hardest. I am a planner, but you have to have a foundation to plan from. (Laughter). You got the job, now you've got to prove you can do this and there's one thing I can't stand is to fail.*

Joan continued to grow professionally. With the support of her grade-level peers, she learned what it meant to collaborate. Planning was a weekly activity where all grade-level members met and worked to align activities with curriculum standards and children's learning needs.

> *I was not assigned a mentor per se, but the other two teachers in second grade--we just bonded and clicked really well.*

The principal held high expectations for the teachers on her staff. As a first year teacher, Joan found approval from her principal. Noting Joan's classroom practices, the principal affirmed Joan's use of research-based strategies that enhanced her classroom environment.

> *The principal, she had very high expectations for her staff and she expected us, even before* [the school system] *said that teachers had to*

> *collaborate, to collaborate. And she expected them to hold once a week meetings to discuss what they would be doing the following week as far as skills that would be taught, what needed to be taught, what was left to be taught. We would take time after school and meet.* [The principal] *was very encouraging, and she would often come in and say "try this" or she would walk in the classroom and take a look at what I was doing. She often expressed she liked the way I ran my classroom and she liked the fact that I was doing centers and how quiet it was and how peaceful. She liked that fact that I used lamps and the coloring factor and just different things.*

As Joan began to feel more comfortable in her practice, she also became more reflective. Recognizing her role as a new teacher, Joan was thoughtful in how she initially began to join in discussions with colleagues. After sensing acceptance from her peers, Joan's reflections led her to find her voice and engage others in the exploration of instructional and management strategies that she and her colleagues found beneficial.

> *Once I felt like I got my feet on the ground, I started to kinda be more reflective and started to talk about what I felt needed to be going on. I didn't want to overstep my bounds cause being the first year teacher, being the new kid on the block, you don't want to push it too much. Because you don't wanna make people feel like you're little miss know it all, maybe. (Laughter).*

Reflecting on this first assignment, Joan questioned whether or not she would have stayed in education if she had not been placed in such a collegial, supportive environment that gave her time to establish her classroom practices.

> *I was glad I taught my first year at* [Barton] *because I was taught a lot of things that first year that helped me when I went to* [Grady, the next teaching job]. *Whereas, I feel if I had started my first year at* [Grady], *I would have stopped. I would have sunk. I wouldn't have survived. I wouldn't have gone back to teaching.*

At the end of her first year, the teacher she replaced returned from her leave of absence, and Joan was forced to reapply for another job within the same school system. Joan was

rehired for another interim position in an urban school, and soon learned that the school was very different.

> *There was no position for me after that first year. So, I had to go to another school because the teacher I was taking over from came. That second year is when I moved into the urban or inner-city setting. The size of the school and the population was very different.*

The differences in the two schools led Joan to identify the roles of school administrators and the levels of student performance as two characteristics that stood out. Joan shared that the school suffered from a hands-off approach to student management and an overall lack of attention to the school's non-instructional needs. She also compared student performance levels, which were drastically different.

> *The next school I went to was* [Grady]. *That was like doing a 180 between* [Barton] *and* [Grady]. *Behaviorally, I had to be more on my toes. There was no support administratively. You didn't want to write up a child at that school because it wasn't handled correctly. The running, the way the school was handled and managed, was very different. With the population, you saw more lower- income students. I saw more students, and this was third grade when I went to* [Grady], *whose reading was very low. Second grade* [at Barton], *just about every one of my students, except for one little boy who received services, could read fluently going to third grade. That wasn't the case at* [Grady].

Frustrated with the lack of support from administration, Joan discussed her need to "build her own bubble" to reinforce learning expectations for her students. Joan explained that this bubble was her coping method to keep other distractions and disruptions, including the chaos of the school, from interfering with her classroom instruction. Since Joan did not believe she could connect to a professional network of support at her new school, she became self-reliant in addressing her professional and students' needs.

> *I think it was more of a frustration on how I saw things being run. I had to almost build my own little bubble around my classroom and try to instill in my students that this is how you should behave and act, and whatever anybody else is doing out in the hall or however anybody else is acting in the classroom is not appropriate. I had to build my own professional bubble just to protect my class so they could learn something that year.*

Becoming a teacher leader. Joan remembered her first opportunity of stepping into a leadership role. Joan's classroom management skills were noticed by her principal. She was asked to share various classroom management methods with staff members, methods that included listening, classroom organization, and team building.

> *The principal did recognize me as someone who was being effective with behavior and managing my classroom. They asked me to do a few things with the staff as far as building community, listening skills, just talking to them about organizing the classroom. Each administrator I've been under has seen my abilities as an effective classroom manager.*

Although Joan enjoyed this opportunity to share and help others, she could not continue to work at Grady Elementary School. She found the lack of leadership support and the lack of organization disturbing. But, through her determination, Joan was able to complete her year at Grady.

> *I just dug my heels in and said I've got to do this and after this year is up I don't have to be here because it was an interim position. That's what I hung onto. I wasn't unprofessional. I had to seek out a lot of things myself.*

Joan was asked to stay on in a permanent position, but she declined. Knowing that the leadership would not change and that her professional beliefs were challenged in this environment, Joan made the decision to move on to another position within the same school system.

> *I was asked to stay at* [Grady]. *I chose not to for two reasons. First of all, I would have never stayed at* [Grady] *just for the size. I think six classrooms*

> *per grade-level are just ridiculous and there shouldn't be any elementary school that big. So that was the first issue I had with* [Grady], *just its immense size; just conflicted directly with my views. The second reason I did not return to* [Grady] *was the administration. I didn't think I was getting the support the administration should have been giving and that I recognize is a big thing. That's very difficult as a teacher to be able to teach in that type of atmosphere. You had to learn to swim on your own at this school and discipline on your own. So, I would not have returned to that school for those two reasons.*

After these first two years of interim positions, Joan was hired into a permanent position at another urban school, Taylor Elementary School, where she spent three years before transferring to Johnson Elementary School, her current placement. Both urban schools proved to be environments in which she gained leadership experiences and appreciation for the importance of her role as a teacher leader in the urban context.

Taylor Elementary School served a large population of minority students. Most of the students lived in government housing. As a young, White woman, Joan had to realign her perspective when interacting with Black parents, co-workers, and students. Understanding the need to have a positive working relationship, Joan attempted to make connections with her students through home visits and positive communication with parents.

> *The children come from three different low income housing* [projects] *and that's most of the children. They probably had like 95% or higher free and reduced lunch at that school. I was in the minority at that school. You had to be able to have the personality to be able to handle that and a lot of times that can make you feel very threatened. You had to be very organized. You had to get to know the children. You had to go into the projects. You had to be able to do that. I think a lot of people found that difficult.*

Over the course of her short tenure, Joan saw dramatic changes in the quality of faculty who were assigned to Taylor. Unknown to her, Joan joined the staff prior to a

reconstitution phase at the school. Taylor's difficulties were magnified by the loss of high performing teachers and administrators.

> [Taylor] *was a very difficult school and still's a very difficult school. It's very needy. The three years I was there, I watched just about every single strong teacher transfer out or move or get hired to leadership positions. The first year I taught it was awesome because there were still so many teachers that were so effective. I got to work with quite a few of them and it was just really great. I absolutely enjoyed it, because I could really see how effective teachers could work together on grade-level. Almost all the grade-levels had some very strong effective teachers that pulled the rest of the grade-level together. They all really worked well together and that was really impressive to see.*

With this exodus of personnel, a void was left in the school's leadership and organization. Recalling that she was one of the few remaining teachers from the mass departure, Joan attributed her sense of community and school history along with her established relationships with students and families as the criteria for her selection as a new school leader.

> *Between the second and third year I was at* [Taylor] *there was such a heavy shift in both teaching and administrative personnel. That school went downhill phenomenally. They needed the few teachers that were left to step up and help a little bit. I think I was given a lot of the roles because I was one of the few teachers that chose to stay when the one principal retired and another principal came in. And this was before they reconstituted the school. I happened to be one of the few teachers that stayed that knew enough about the kids and families. I was asked to take a leadership role just because I knew the community and knew the kids. That made a difference.*

Joan was recruited to step in as a new grade-level chair, leadership team member, special education committee member, and classroom management consultant to new teachers. This overload of experiences took its toll on Joan.

> *The next two years I helped and gave many teachers good ideas through in-services and informal advice. I worked for Project GRAD* [Graduation

> Really Achieves Dreams] (as CMCD (Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline) coach for [Taylor]) *so I was advising teachers on discipline and classroom management, helping them out in that area when needed. I also was on the leadership committee. I was grade-level chair. I also worked on the s-team* [special education] *committee, too.*

In addition to her duties as a classroom teacher, Joan also dedicated long hours to monitor after-school detention, walk students home and complete any outside duties that were not accomplished during the course of the school day. Joan's load of responsibilities was made more complex by the shifting expectations of new leadership and the uncertainties of the newly hired staff members who were unfamiliar with the needs and culture of the school. The school was also under pressure to raise student performance as mandated by federal guidelines.

> *I was often there until five or six o'clock in the evening. That school took long hours. I was frequently doing home visits. I was often caught walking students back home because they had to stay after school for some reason or another. It wasn't expected of you to stay, but it's what had to be done at that school to function and make sure the students were learning.*

After Joan's third year, the reconstitution process was initiated. As part of the reconstitution of faculty, teachers who were interested in staying at Taylor were asked to reapply for their position. Joan reapplied with hopes of learning specific plans to address improved leadership and support. Without reassurances regarding strategies to address these needs during her interview process, Joan made the decision to seek a different teaching assignment, but remain in the urban context.

> *In that third year I was at* [Taylor]*, I still didn't feel I was getting the support. First, we felt we had negative support and then we felt we weren't getting much support at all. That year was kinda crazy and by the end of the year, I didn't have very much respect for the administration that was there. I think she put too many demands on the teachers.*

> *I didn't want to risk going back to that school, even though I dearly loved the community.*

Joan explained the diversity of students as the factor that fostered her desire to remain in the urban context. Noting the challenges urban students bring with them to the classroom, Joan's commitment was inspired by the variety of personalities she encountered.

> *And I think that I just enjoyed the children in the urban setting a lot more. There was more diversity in the children and to me that's more of a challenge because I enjoyed different personalities and that's why I like the urban setting now.*

Joan was recruited by a previous Grady teacher who became a principal at Johnson Elementary School. Johnson was a small urban, community school whose student performance levels were rising. Joan's prior association with her principal at Johnson Elementary School also gave her insight into the school leadership's professional work habits and the level of expectations that would be required of her. Joan joined the staff as a fourth grade teacher.

> *I did work with the principal when she was at* [Grady] *as a curriculum generalist. So I did know her prior. I knew her qualities already. I knew she would be an effective leader. That's one reason why I wanted to work under her.*

Prior to her agreement to move to Johnson Elementary School, Joan stipulated that the principal would allow her to just teach for one year. Joan expressed her need to recover from the overload of responsibilities and stress at Taylor, and her principal complied.

> *The first year I was at* [Johnson], *and this was basically for my sanity, I asked to be left alone. Because I couldn't have another year like I'd had at* [Taylor] *where I was given these responsibilities and tried to perform them, but roadblocks were put up in my way when I was trying to be effective to help something. Really to help a ship that was already sinking*

> *and that can be very difficult. I was feeling very burnt out in teaching. I had just about decided to quit teaching because I was that burnt out. So it was, I will work some more, but you've got to leave me alone the first year. And the principal was great. She did that. She left me alone the first year I was here.*

During Joan's recuperation time, she observed her new surroundings and watched the interactions of her new peers and administrators. She credited these observations with revealing a lot about the staff and their interactions. Citing observation as an essential tool, Joan was convinced that observing others enhanced her understanding of her new teaching context.

> *The first year I did a lot of watching. I watched how staff was interacting. I watched how other teachers worked. I think that's the biggest thing with me. I do sit back and watch and observe a room and see where the dynamics are and see what's happening. I think that in itself helps a lot. I think if more people spent more time watching dynamics of what was going on, I think there would be a lot more communication and a lot less hurt feelings.*

Maturing professional. After her first year of teaching and settling into her new teaching environment at Johnson Elementary School, Joan began to accept leadership responsibilities once again. She became a mentor to a local university intern, grade-level chair, and leadership team member.

> *She* [the principal] *truly did leave me completely alone my first year. Then, as my second year started, like ok, I left you alone (laughter). You can be on leadership. Here's an intern and on down the line.*

In her role as a mentor teacher, Joan explained her belief in the importance and the responsibility mentors hold in shaping young teachers' professional outlooks. She believed her good habits and previous professional experiences were important attributes she brought to her mentoring role. Although she initially presented a confident front on

this subject, she admitted that she has continued to question her practices and her abilities.

> *I think having the intern was my first time to have a student for the full year. I think that was a new step for me, having someone else to watch me teach. I think my role as a school leader is important, especially with new teachers who are first coming in. It's important to teach good habits versus bad habits. I think I have plenty of good habits due to my prior training and due to where I've been at schools. Becoming a mentor was huge for me, because I still say I am an effective teacher, but part of me still doesn't think I am. Even though the scores say I am, even though students love me, even though parents want me for their students, and so on.*

Not only was Joan willing to assist young teachers, but she has also exhibited a willingness to assist peers in difficult classroom situations. Joan explained how she quietly gave fellow teachers assistance when she led disruptive children from the classroom to ease tensions. Seen as a form of leadership, Joan believes a teacher must be confident in his/her ability to provide support in such a manner.

> *I'm the type of person that wants to help others if at all possible when possible and I love to give suggestions. I guess what might set me apart is I'm one that's not afraid to share. If I happen to walk by a classroom and I hear a teacher yelling and they're at the point… you just have a feeling that teacher just needs five minutes or they need someone to take a student. I'm not afraid to walk in and even though it's not my responsibility, and help out in that case. And I usually, and if I do that, I usually do it quietly and silently so that students don't even know I was there. I'll just take the child by the hand and lead them out of the room and be done with it. I don't pass judgment on what was happening because we all can get to the point where we're losing it. I think a leader is one who recognizes that and can handle that situation.*

Continuing, Joan believed that classroom management was the benchmark that sets teacher leaders apart from their peers. She was convinced that classroom management was the single most important characteristic of teacher leaders.

> *I think above all teacher leaders are recognized by the way they run their classroom. I think that's the first thing people notice about them. Because that's the only thing that we have to define ourselves is how we run our classroom. Otherwise we wouldn't be set apart from anybody else.*

Joan's self-efficacy appeared strong. Her confidence in her abilities as an educator has been influenced by the various school responsibilities she has experienced in her career. From her own perspective, Joan's previous career in business has also influenced the way she now performs.

> *I think that those organizational skills that I learned outside of the education profession have helped me greatly with my teaching profession. In the way I organize my classroom, but also in the way I deal with different people on a day to day basis whether it's the parents, administration, the students, that type of thing.*

Joan's belief in the need for education to perform more like a business stemmed from the inadequacies of substandard teachers and administrators she believes she has encountered. Recalling her earlier experiences in education, Joan's committed stance to quality in education was apparent.

> *And I to this day, I still firmly believe if public schools were run like a private business, where teachers were held accountable, they went through evaluations every year, their pay raise was determined by their quality of education, and not merit pay based on test scores, that I think we would be singing a whole different tune. There would not be as many problems as I see occurring and there wouldn't be as many disruptive teachers as I see. I still believe that.*

When I questioned Joan further about her description of "disruptive" teachers, she explained.

> *I think disruptive teachers are more along the lines as (exhale)… I think that there's a lot of people working in the teaching profession that maybe they chose it because it was an easy thing and their benefits are good. Maybe they're not in the right place. Maybe their job, it could be that the school that they're at is not for them. Maybe another school would work*

> *better for them. I don't know why they chose it. I think there are a lot of people teaching in the teaching profession that are allowed to get away with a lot of things. Through my years of teaching, I've seen so many teachers that have been tenured that have no business teaching. It could be they should be encouraged to find a different profession. Not everybody is cut out to be a teacher.*

Not only did Joan describe a substandard teacher, she also offered her idea of a productive teacher. After I had heard her use the term "effective teacher" frequently over the course of our first two interviews, I asked her to clarify what being an effective teacher meant to her.

> *My definition of an effective teacher is one who is good at reflecting, has strong classroom management skills, has patience to handle all the little quirks that can happen during the day, and has the ability to control even the most off-the-wall classes. It's not everybody that can do that--and be able to do all that and still teach and make sure the children are learning what they need to learn. I don't like to brag about myself, but you know my test score show it. The TVAAS* [Tennessee Value Added Assessment Scores] *show it. I can say I'm an effective teacher because of those qualities. And those are the qualities I have. I think it comes down to, are you engaging the students? Are you getting them to learn? I think that's what it really comes down to, and how you do it is up to you.*

To protect herself from becoming a disruptive teacher and to maintain her effective habits, Joan described her practice of reflection. Joan used this strategy to analyze and process her daily classroom performance in order to promote her continued growth. Removing herself from the school environment has enabled Joan to more clearly reflect and analyze daily occurrences to improve her classroom practices.

> *So it's very important to reflect and I think everyone should do it whether you do it mentally or whether you do it on paper. I choose to do it a lot verbally and mentally. I talk things out. I have to step away from the scene. I can't stay in the scene to be able to reflect. I can't sit here in the classroom at the end of the day and be able to think about it clearly. I have to go home and I have to unwind. And a lot of times it takes me, whether it takes me going home, and talking to someone who's also out of*

> *the scene to be able to reflect. And then once I unwind and I start to untie all the knots that happened throughout the day, then I can start thinking about it. I think that that's very important. I think you reflect a lot better when you're not in the atmosphere.*

In addition to her process of reflection, Joan practiced a technique she calls *bracketing* (Hochschild, 1983; 1990). Joan has learned to separate the emotion and complexity of students' lives from other areas of her life. During this school term, she also had to bracket her personal life from her classroom life as she dealt with the death of her father.

> *I bracket my roles. Throughout this whole year with my dad dying and now he has died, I had to bracket myself from that because I still had to function at school going through all that. I come and bracket myself here at school. It has to be that way out of survival. I do like teaching in the urban school and you have to draw the line somewhere. I show compassion, sympathy while they're here at school, but I don't hang on to it when I leave here.*

Joan's responsibility as a mentor, peer and effective teacher also extended to her ability to constructively interact with her principal. From each of her teaching contexts, Joan described the practices of her principals during her time of employment. Her choice to share the principal's roles in their schools demonstrated her belief of the influence of school leaders. Joan also expressed her belief that administrators and teacher leaders should be supportive of one another in addressing student needs.

> *Teacher leaders and principals need to interact with trust and honesty. Teachers should approach principals with change that would benefit the school with support for why the change would be good.*

As Joan reflected over the course of her career, she shared one of her greatest accomplishments as a teacher. Believing that just becoming a teacher was a feat unto itself, Joan spoke of the complex process of putting it all together to assist students in the

learning process. Joan also offered her ability to promote students' enthusiasm for learning as another great accomplishment in her career. Joan's smile and tone indicated that she was pleased with her ability to encourage students' love of learning and to support their learning initiative.

> *I think my greatest accomplishment as a teacher was just becoming a teacher. Just figuring out how it all works. How to put all the components together to get something that runs smoothly so children can feel safe, and that they can love learning it. I mean it impresses me when a child comes up to me and says I want to do a report on such and such. I'm just like wooo, where did this burst come from? Yes, please do! I think that's my biggest accomplishment.*

Conclusion. Throughout her life as a middle child, struggling student, businesswoman, and urban educator, Joan has learned to negotiate her way through the complexities that surround her. Joan's path of self-discovery has led her through one suburban and three urban schools over a ten-year period of time. Her current placement at Johnson Elementary School has provided Joan with support, relief, and growth in her journey as an educator. Joan planned to continue in her journey as a teacher leader.

> *As I have grown in my profession I have just gotten used to it, kind of like math. I'm good at it, but never really liked it until I learned new ways to teach it and handle it. As for my future as a leader, I will keep doing what I do best-- try to be there when needed and help as many children as possible. As I continue with my career I hope to show other teachers how to handle the difficulties of working in an urban school and also the joys. I hope to be the one behind the scenes helping when needed and giving teachers that confidence that I was given the first year I taught.*

Case Analysis

Introduction. An analysis of narrative reveals specific recurrent themes in Joan's data. Her roles as a negotiator and mentor are discussed in this section, along with other themes relating to collaboration, professional burnout and family involvement.

Role identity. ***Joan was a negotiator.*** Throughout the course of Joan's life, she has negotiated. As a role that she developed early in life while interacting with her siblings, babysitting and working in children's programs, Joan has transferred this set of skills into both of her professional careers. First, in business, she negotiated with managers and vendors for profit opportunities. In education, her ability to observe and discern the nuances of each school context gave Joan practice in reading situations, communicating with various individuals, and learning how to meet the needs of students. Joan's willingness to adapt and remain flexible within her contexts of operation has strengthened her confidence and boosted her self-efficacy.

Examining Joan's data revealed that she has traversed various school expectations, leadership styles, grade-level teams, needs of student populations, community traditions, and levels of parent involvement. Joan's confidence about changing contexts and her belief in her own abilities validated her role as a negotiator.

> *You have to learn the balance, the compromising and dealing with adults and students. You have to learn that what works for one adult and student may not work for another* [adult and student]. *You have to learn how to watch and observe and listen to what they're saying and try to pick out the layers.*

Initiative, problem-solving and communication skills are three recurrent characteristics that are associated with this role. All of these traits have strengthened Joan's negotiation abilities. Noting that she has learned to use a "little sugar instead of all the sour that can go with it" to facilitate interactions, her ability and confidence to communicate with others has moved beyond the boundaries of the classroom to include school and community efforts to address student learning needs. An example of her

ability to negotiate was the high rate of success Joan garnered in meeting with parents after the first grading period. As a means to establish working partnerships with parents, Joan determined that if parents could not come to her, then she would go to parents. With the support of her principal, Joan has made a point of meeting with every parent in her classroom prior to the release of student report cards for the last four years. When parents have not been able to travel to school, Joan has initiated a home visit. She related that her time with parents was a positive experience, during which she has reinforced the partnership needed to support children.

> *I make sure every single parent talks to me and sees me within the first month of school. When that first report card goes out, I don't even show it to the parent until I've had a conference with them, whether I have to personally walk it to their homes or drive it to their homes, that's what it takes, I do.*

Joan's ability to persuade parents, to compromise with them, and to meet them in their own environments enabled her to make the connections necessary to establish positive working relationships. Joan has demonstrated care in taking the time to maximize parental involvement. Building working relationships with parents/guardians has been a proactive measure that Joan views as critical to meeting student needs.

Although Joan found negotiating relationships with parents to be a mostly positive experience, her ability to sustain professional role congruence became more difficult as her professional role as a teacher was affected by external conflicts she could control. During Joan's tenure at Taylor Elementary School, she came to understand that when an organization has so many needs, it is very difficult for one person to maintain order and stabilize operations. Smylie (1995) argues that to understand teacher

leadership, we must understand the contexts in which teacher leaders operate. In order to develop teacher leadership to its fullest potential, we must also address the work contexts of teacher leaders. The urban environment, just like any environment that has been ignored and denied resources (Doherty, 1998), can contribute to the tensions associated with schools (Banks et al., 2005; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 1999). The depth of the problems related to Taylor's day-to-day operation contributed to Joan's professional development in a negative fashion. Johnson and Donaldson (2007) warn of reversals in teacher growth because of the stresses of leadership assignments; and Joan experienced this first hand. Joan's growth as a teacher was impaired as her leadership tasks, rather than her teaching responsibilities, became the focus of her work.

Jacobson (2005), Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005), Nevarez and Wood (2007), and Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) have affirmed through their research that urban schools lack leadership capacity. Joan's leadership work was focused on the larger needs of the school, and her efforts supplemented the lack of formal leadership capacity at Taylor Elementary School. As Joan's enacted roles of teacher and leader became inverted in priority, so did her discomfort with her strained role standards and the stress of work overload. When the toll became too much for her, Joan changed her professional context. Joan's experience contributes to the understanding that large urban schools with high percentages of poor and minority students have the highest teacher turnover rates (National Commission of Teaching and America's Future, 2003).

Joan was a mentor. Because of Joan's confidence in her abilities as an effective teacher, she believed she had a responsibility to assist other teachers in their professional

growth. Joan's pre-service internship and first year of classroom experience fortified her professional practices and impressed upon her the importance of professional growth and teamwork.

> *Helping out the young teachers, the new ones just coming in the door--that's a big thing. Giving them suggestions on what they might do to help get their classroom going. There's a mountain of informal things you can do just walking down the hall. You know, as we joke around, we have tons of informal meetings walking down the hall all the time. The main thing to say for teacher leaders on an informal role is supporting one another. I think that's the big one.*

Although Joan has recently stepped into the formal role of mentor, her ability to guide the development of others became evident early in her career. In her second year of teaching, Joan has sought opportunities to share her classroom management expertise with others. Over the course of time, Joan began to network and offer assistance to her peers in many different ways.

> *Teachers knew they could come to me if they needed advice and a few of them did seek me out and ask advice. I helped and gave many teachers good ideas through in-services and informal advice. I have seen many of my ideas being taken back and used in the classroom by many of the staff. This makes me feel like I have helped more then just my students. I'm the type of person that wants to help others if at all possible, when possible, and I love to give suggestions.*

As her confidence and sense of self-efficacy have grown, Joan has elected to provide support to other new teachers. In her current mentor role, Joan has opened her classroom to university students as they prepare to enter the teaching profession. This shift from having confidence in one area of her practice, classroom management, to believing in all her instructional practices has given Joan insight into her role as a mentor. She believed her role as a mentor was evidence of her habits as a good educator.

> *I'm being chosen because I have the good qualities for being an effective teacher and therefore, I really should share them and try to help other teachers become such.*

Joan has begun to understand her responsibility as she has gained confidence to coach from the side rather than lead only by example. She related that good teachers must be taught good habits by mentors who have the skills and are willing to guide the new teachers in their formative years in the profession.

> *I also recognize that because I'm good at what I have to do, that's not possible* [to stay behind the scenes]. *You need other good people to help train the people coming up. You need other good people to help you guide the people that need guidance. One person can't do it all alone. I think my role as a school leader is important especially with new teachers who are first coming in.*

Suranna and Moss (2002) and Blank and Kershaw's (2009) research confirms Joan's beliefs. Suranna and Moss's study concluded that the most commonly recognized trait of teacher leaders was an ability to mentor. Blank and Kershaw promote mentoring as "collective learning" (p. 2), in which teacher leaders give direction and assist in acclimating new teachers to the profession. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) also reinforce this concept by stating that teacher leaders have the power to "….influence others toward improved instructional practice (p. 5). Joan believed her prior experiences qualified her for this role.

Distributed leadership. ***Joan sought out support through collaboration with peers.*** Joan was taught early in her education career that team work was essential. In her first assignment in a suburban school, Joan collaborated with grade-level peers to organize instruction, plan and implement professional study groups and contribute to the daily workings of the school. After being without a supportive web of peers the following

three years, Joan shared that the lack of support compelled her to build her own "bubble." Joan explained that out of a need for survival, she sought out effective ways to handle student behavior so that teaching and learning could take place. In collaboration with her team members at Taylor Elementary School, Joan devised an after-school detention program to hold students accountable for disruptive behavior that interfered with instruction and learning.

> *You will get worn out so much faster if you don't recognize that we've got to help each other out. I just so happened to have been lucky to work with other really fantastic teachers. They hired other fantastic teachers on that third grade-level and we knew the reality of it. We knew that in order for us to get through, we were gonna have to stick together and that was the way it was gonna be.*

Maintained and regulated solely by the teachers on the third grade team after school hours and without extra pay, this network of support is an example of Joan and her team members' initiative to collaborate and their commitment to students' learning.

> *It was something we did as a choice on third grade. It was not something that we had to do, but it was something that was needed just in order to control the discipline and in order to get the students to turn in their work when needed. Parents had been given a letter letting them know that if their child received such and such behavior grade or if they missed such and such number of assignments they would stay for detention and most parents agreed and were fine with it and when they were talking to teachers, but it was something … that was another thing we had to organize. The administration wasn't gonna do it for us. And it was something we found we had to do just to make sure that the students were gonna be learning and getting what was needed.*

Through this teacher-initiated form of distributed leadership, the grade-level team filled a void in formal leadership by working outside of their expected range of responsibilities. Gronn (2002) explains that spontaneous leadership occurs where pairs or trios of individuals interact to resolve a common problem or concern. Joan and her grade-

level team operated from a sense of survival. The team held students accountable to academic and behavior standards based upon their collective vision of what was needed. Each person within the grade-level team participated in planning and monitoring the after-school detention program. Only after they had devised and formulated their program did they present the scheme to their principal.

> *We all knew if we wanted to stay sane until the end of the year, we had to do these things. No one was gonna step up and help us. And you know we were all about teaching and we knew that was our job. And one way or another, we had to get the students to learn.*

Joan's responsibility in this process as the grade-level chairperson was to ensure that all aspects of the strategy ran smoothly, and like her team members, she also took turns monitoring students in detention. According to Joan, the success of the program was evidenced by a reduction of student disruptions and increase of student work.

Teacher leadership. ***Because of Joan's classroom management abilities, she was a teacher leader.*** Joan recalled experiences in all of her schools where she was recognized for her behavior management skills. At Barton and Johnson Elementary Schools, she was informally acknowledged by her principal for the calm learning environments she maintained; and at Grady and Taylor Elementary Schools, she was formally identified and recruited to assist teachers who struggled in coping with difficult student behaviors. Over the course of our interviews, Joan repeatedly referenced classroom management as a critical skill for all teachers and the most salient practice of teacher leaders. Her belief concurred with Crowther, Ferguson, and Hann's (2009) study that identified teachers whose abilities to facilitate learning communities was important

to promoting positive student behaviors. Joan believed she has a responsibility to help new teacher teachers develop sound habits in behavior management.

> *Above all I think teacher leaders are recognized by the way they run their classrooms. I think that's the first thing people notice about them. Because that's the only thing that we have to define ourselves is* how we run our *classroom. Otherwise we wouldn't be set apart from anybody else.*

Joan's beliefs in planning, organization and the communication of learning expectations were noted as important management functions that she concluded were necessary to maintain an effective classroom.

> *I think that if you don't have good classroom management, if you're not organized, you're not gonna be as effective as another urban teacher. Not to say you can't do it being that way, but I think you're gonna have a more difficult time of it. And I think your students' grades will eventually reflect it.*

Joan sought out teaching contexts that were aligned with her professional beliefs and practices. Despite Joan's efforts to find professional satisfaction in all of her school assignments, Grady and Taylor Elementary Schools, proved to be the greatest challenges. In these two schools, Joan experienced role conflict (Burke, 2006) to such a degree that she sought out other teaching assignments despite her best efforts to influence change. At Grady Elementary School, Joan chose not to compromise her teacher role standards and accept low student behavior expectations and minimal administrative support. As a result, she isolated herself from the other educators (building her bubble) until she fulfilled the requirements of her teaching contract.

> *I felt that year I was at* [Grady], *it was very chaotic. Not everybody had the same expectations I did.*

In her next school assignment, Joan believed her school and community experience made her a viable candidate to assume vacated school leadership positions. In her third year at Taylor, Joan determined that Taylor Elementary School was not a productive professional environment due to the administration's lack of leadership and the high number of labor-intensive leadership responsibilities she was assigned. These factors further challenged Joan in a difficult teaching environment. Joan self-identified her near burnout status while at Taylor Elementary.

> *I didn't want to return to that school knowing that I might see the same issues again. I'd had enough. I just couldn't do it when it came down to it. And so, I ended up at* [Johnson] *in fourth grade.*

Kashima, Foddy, and Patow (2002) suggest that to retain role congruence, individuals either realign their role standards or incorporate new roles. Joan chose neither of these. Instead, she opted to transfer to different school contexts in order to refrain from compromising her professional beliefs and preserve her role congruence. As a means of survival, she accepted another urban teaching assignment at Johnson Elementary School, which allowed her to maintain her role standards (Biddle, 1996), resolve her role confict (Burke, 2006), and recover from the overload of leadership tasks she had been assigned (Little, 1988; Leithwood, 1992). Joan's deep-seated commitment to the standards of her teacher role was evident when she elected to remain true to her professional identity. In both of these school transfers, Joan stepped into unknown work contexts in hopes of finding a professional environment where she could be the most effective. When this proved otherwise, Joan had the courage and confidence to leave for the sake of self-preservation.

Many new teachers do not have the ability, desire, or opportunity to persevere within the urban context, and they desert the profession based upon their first and only experience in the inner-city (Haberman, 2005). However, in Joan's case, her deep commitment to her role as a teacher and her problem-solving and negotiation abilities enabled Joan to continue teaching in the urban environment. In Joan's next teaching assignment, she negotiated with her principal to suspend leadership responsibilities for a year so that she could focus on her teaching practices. This recuperation time proved to be a turning point for Joan. After her first year at Johnson, Joan resumed her role as a strong urban teacher leader.

Urban teacher leadership. ***Joan embraced diversity.*** Diversity is a natural part of life for Joan. From her childhood, she related how she had been exposed to different students as part of babysitting responsibilities and her family hosting international students in their home. Living a year abroad also gave her another perspective that built appreciation for different cultures and ways of living.

> *I got an exposure to diversity. The diversity, personality, cultural diversity, all of those attract me to the urban school because you find more of that in the urban areas than you do in the suburban areas and even rural areas. I grew up in rural areas, and that's how I know that. I was one that loved going to New York City and I could have just sat at in Harlem or Greenwich Village or wherever, just watch people walk by. Because I just like the differences in people and I think that that's what attracts me to an urban setting more than anything else.*

Joan's exposure to diverse populations extended beyond race and culture. Prior to Joan's experience in education, she participated in philanthropic work through a local children's hospital and urban church programs. In outreach work with her urban church, she had opportunities to gain a sense of urban (including homeless) families and the socio-

economic challenges they faced. Joan's work within the community and with diverse populations gave her opportunities to look outside her own perspective. Her willingness to share her time and interact with others in need demonstrated Joan's caring and compassion. Her desire to help revealed her commitment to others and her desire to contribute to her world. Once she made the transition in her professional life from the business world to education, she shifted her volunteer focus to the full-time profession of teaching.

Joan was assigned leadership responsibilities by her principal because of her relationships with families and knowledge of the school and community contexts. In Joan's third school placement, a dramatic loss of key personnel left voids in leadership from within the ranks of classroom teachers. Roles and responsibilities had to be filled. Because Joan had a sense of the local community and relationships with families, her principal delegated leadership positions to her as a fourth-year teacher. These connections had been formed by the frequent visits Joan made into the community. Joan's visits also demonstrated her confidence in her abilities to step outside traditional practices to assist students and to communicate to parents her concerns and expectations.

> *To establish positive energy in the community with the school meant a lot to me too because I don't think you can have an effective school if the school isn't trusted by the community. I did really appreciate that community. I loved the children there and it was a hard decision for me to leave that school.*

Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling- Hammond, and Duffy, (2005) and Delpit (1995), Ladson-Billings (1995) and Nieto (1999) contend that external social and political strains can impair communications between educators and

parents. Joan was able to circumvent cultural differences and establish communications and relationships with her students' parents. Her ability to work past conflict gave her credibility with parents that few other teachers have been able to attain. Not only did she exhibit care through building relationships, but she also demonstrated her ability to understand and resolve parent concerns and cultural tensions (Tillman, 2005).

Joan explained that the parent relationships established were vital to her work in the classroom at Taylor Elementary School. The relationships provided support for meeting professional responsibilities and encouraged her perseverance in a difficult context. She felt valued by parents in her role as a teacher.

> *A lot of the parents knew me and they knew me as an effective teacher. A lot of them really cared about me.*

Joan shared that of all the schools where she had taught, Taylor was the school in which she was the most emotionally invested. When she confided, " … it was a hard decision for me to leave that school," her somber demeanor reflected her remorse at leaving the school.

Because of work overload and lack of administrative support in the urban schools, Joan was close to burnout. Joan's appointment to leadership roles was important to her development, but these appointments unbalanced in her workload. In an attempt to sustain school operation, the short-term remedy of placing inexperienced teachers in multiple leadership roles was flawed. This strategy solved immediate problems at the expense of the faculty. Prior to being assigned these new leadership responsibilities, Joan took on additional tasks as part of the grade-level after school detention program. Her overload of leadership appointments led to losing Joan as an

important faculty member who had strong community ties. From Joan's stance, the demands of the positions were overwhelming and took her to the brink of burnout.

> *I was feeling very burnt out in teaching and I had just about decided to quit teaching cause I was that burnt out. The administration at that time was not as organized. The administration was supportive in words, but not in action. The administration didn't do the little things that help make a classroom run smoother. The administration didn't communicate on a school level that freed up the teachers' time to concentrate on other things.*

Jacobson (2005), Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), Nevarez and Wood (2007), and Smylie, Conley, and Marks (2002) affirm that formal leadership capacity in urban schools is inferior. Joan's experiences verified these studies' findings. Despite her hard work, long hours, and commitment to Taylor Elementary School, Joan realized other influences were much stronger, and she could not remain in this environment. Her attempts to provide support, although commendable, were not enough to resolve the pervasive issues in the school. Joan made the decision to transfer to another school in order to protect her role and to sustain her longevity as an educator.

Conclusion. Salient issues that emerged from Joan's interviews revealed her desire to help others as evidenced by her concern for parents, students, and peers. Joan's healthy levels of self-efficacy and confidence contributed to her willingness to assist other teachers. The concern about work overload due to a lack of administrative support and the possibility of teacher burnout further reinforced to Joan the importance of collaboration and the need for a network of support within all ranks of school personnel. Through Joan's diverse experiences, she has earned recognition for her abilities to assist others. Joan's ten-year journey in education has provided a platform to continue her

work within the community. Although teacher leadership was important to Joan, it was another extension of her role as an educator to reach out to others in her own profession.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reported participants' stories of their development as urban teacher leaders. I was able to examine the interview and reflection data of the study from two qualitative perspectives, narrative analysis and analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narrative analysis made it possible to present stories of each participant's journey to becoming a teacher leader. My analysis of narrative generated a more traditional qualitative explication of findings. Together, these analytic perspectives made it possible to present a broad perspective on my participants and their lived experiences as they adapted to roles of leadership in the urban context.

Through the lens of narrative analysis, stories were retold chronologically. Each participant's story was organized by the categories of early life, beginning professional, becoming a teacher leader, and maturing professional. The narratives revealed values, beliefs, life events, professional choices, and insights. The second methodology used to filter the data of this study, analysis of narrative, required that I create typologies for each participant. The analyses of this process revealed the most frequent and salient points from the participants' data. These elements were then determined to be themes, patterns, or relationships within the theoretical lenses of role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, and urban teacher leadership.

The participants of this study, described incidents and events that were poignant, passionate, funny, painful, tragic, uplifting, triumphant, and puzzling. Teacher leaders' stories revealed powerful insights into their lives as interpreted through my lens as a

researcher. Their revelations will contribute to the conversations about promoting teacher leadership and urban leadership. The findings from this chapter provide the foundation for the cross-case analysis presented at the beginning of Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: CROSS-CASE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

> Leadership is a process that occurs within the minds of individuals who live in a culture—a process that entails the capacities to create stories, to understand and evaluate these stories, and to appreciate the struggle among stories. Ultimately, certain kinds of stories will typically become predominant—in particular, kinds of stories that provide an adequate and timely sense of identity for individuals who live within a community or institution. (Gardner, 1995, p. 22)

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the personal journeys of teacher leadership of five urban elementary teachers. The self - perceptions and social experiences of teacher leaders within their school contexts offered insight into the development of five participants' role identities and leadership assertion choices. In Chapter 4, data from interviews, reflections and digital recordings were analyzed through the qualitative approaches of narrative analysis and analysis of narrative. These lenses of analysis were used to garner a rich perspective on urban teachers' leadership development. Findings, in the form of stories and themes, were presented for each participant.

This final chapter provides a cross-case analysis based on the data reported in Chapter 4. Following the cross-case analysis findings, conclusions, and recommendations are presented for educators (urban administrators, urban teacher

leaders, and higher education institutions) and researchers to advance understandings of urban teacher leadership. In closing, I will share my reflections on this study.

Cross-case Analyses Findings

The narratives of Dorothy, Patty, Amy, Penny, and Joan provided insight into the research questions of this study: What are teacher leaders' stories of their development as teacher leaders? How do urban teacher leaders' experiences influence their leadership growth? How do urban teacher leaders think administrators influence their leadership development? How do urban teacher leaders perceive their roles in urban schools? How do urban teacher leaders contribute to the advancement of school goals? The cross-case analyses presented in this section looks across the five cases to explore relationships among the findings reported in Chapter 4.

In conducting this cross-case analysis, the participants' individual cases were revisited to note similarities and differences across the findings (see cross-case analyses procedures in Chapter 4). From these comparisons, a collective view of participants' narratives generated additional ways to consider the findings. These cross-case findings are organized according to the theoretical constructs that have been highlighted throughout this study: teacher roles, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, and urban teacher leadership.

Findings Related to Teacher Roles

From a cross-case examination of participants' roles, findings are described across study participants. As is evident in the data, many of the roles identified are closely interrelated. The roles of mentor, collaborator, helper, learner, negotiator,

servant, and teacher have been analyzed to compare profiles of participants' roles as enacted in their experiences as urban teacher leaders.

Stryker (1980) affirms roles as frames of conduct people choose to enact in varying situations. Strykers' perspective on roles helps to explain teacher leaders' abilities to shift between the varying demands of their school activities and responsibilities. Each participant in this study exhibited contextual and professional roles. Contextual roles were those required by the teacher leader's setting. As shared by participants, this setting could have been classrooms, schools or communities. Professional roles were dependent upon the tasks that the teacher leaders faced. Whether engaged in committee tasks, mentoring a new grade-level team member, collaborating with principals, or participating in other school related tasks, teacher leaders varied behaviors according to the needs of their professional duties. In looking across the participants, the dominant roles identified were mentor and collaborator. Other significant, but less prevalent roles were helper, learner, negotiator, servant, and teacher.

Mentor. The mentor role was identified in three of the five participants' data. Amy, Patty, and Joan indicated that mentoring was one of their most frequently enacted roles. They confirmed the importance of assisting new teachers as they first established themselves in the profession. Each of these three talked positively about pre-service mentors who modeled skills and practices that they have incorporated as part of their own routines. Joan emphasized the importance of structure, routine and good professional habits. Patty affirmed her mentor's practice of forming relationships that enhanced team building efforts. Amy noted the thoughtful patience her mentor provided in giving his

time to her. Patty and Amy have continued to maintain a relationship with their mentors and continue to seek input and advice. All three of these teacher leaders have served as pre-service mentors themselves, and all three were provided support beyond their pre-service time and into their first professional year.

Dorothy's role as a mentor was a role that she saw as a form of helping. Dorothy's judgment of her success in helping someone determined her overall outlook on how she perceived herself to be a mentor. Whether parents, students, new teachers, team members or administrators, Dorothy did not refrain from helping anyone who was in need. Dorothy's mentoring role was directly related to the professional assistance she offered to anyone in the learning community. Penny shared how she individually and collectively worked with pre-service teachers at her school. These experiences provided satisfaction to Penny as she realized she was influencing the practices of future school leaders.

Collaborator. The next most prevalent role, collaborator, was affirmed consistently by each participant. Understanding the power of collective effort and networking, these teacher leaders shared powerful examples of the use of collaboration in their school experiences. Dorothy shared her approaches to engaging others when she began to acclimate herself into a new context. Penny described her first years of working with other new teachers who banded together to survive their first professional year. Joan shared that her first school gave her opportunities to work as a team member and to practice professional development in small-group settings. Patty believed that collaboration and support from other teachers determined whether or not she remained

in the profession. And Amy's collaboration enabled her to grow in her profession as well as gain support for her faith from fellow teachers who were Christian.

Helper. As the one participant who identified herself as a helper, Dorothy viewed her abilities to help as her most important strength. Her commitment to this role seemed to be a lifelong practice tied firmly to her sense of caring for others. Dorothy's passionate commitment to this role was referenced repeatedly in her interviews and reflections. Her willingness to provide assistance was a need that pervaded her life and professional practices. Dorothy provided guidance and acted as a facilitator to assist others in attaining success. Dorothy's vision of herself as a helper was demonstrated through a servant approach to tasks, with the goal of promoting success for others. This outlook suggested that she held others' needs above her own.

Other participants, Amy, Penny, Patty, and Joan, also viewed themselves as individuals who provided assistance; but they did not express their commitment at the same level as Dorothy. Amy expressed helping as a role that she based on her religious principles. Amy believed that by serving she was living out a premise of her faith. Amy's willingness to put others before herself sometimes created role disturbance (Burke, 2006), but her commitment to the role of helping has not changed her habits of practice.

Penny and Patty described their acts of helping as collaboration. In regards to their roles with others, Penny and Patty's view of helping suggested that they experienced empowered feelings from sharing information back and forth with others. Within this

reciprocal process, Patty and Penny projected a sense of equality with peers. Equality with peers was a common theme of this group of participants.

Joan's experience of helping was lived out in the local community and in her school environment. Through her church, local missions and hospital, Joan volunteered her time to provide assistance related to children's services and family needs. As a professional, she accepted assistance from others, but also provided support in tense situations by relieving teachers of disruptive children.

The practices of helping described by these participants are generated because of varying worldviews and life experiences. Whether this difference points toward generational, faith-related, socio-economic or educational core values, clear distinctions exist among these teacher leaders' views of their roles as helpers.

Learner. Dorothy expressed her deep enjoyment of learning. Over Dorothy's lengthy career, her greatest learning has come from the mentors she sought out and the students she taught. As she changed contexts, she worked to learn the practices of each school and the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968) that was built into the cultures and expectations of the various learning environments. From her students, Dorothy asserts that she learned the most from the children who displayed the greatest behavior challenges. Her willingness to integrate new understandings, her openness to different approaches, and her belief in the value of observing and listening to others contributed to her learning capacity.

Joan and Penny discussed their own forms of self-initiated learning, but they did not focus upon being a learner as a salient role in their lives. Joan shared how she

formally and informally worked to learn how best to address her professional needs by referencing articles collected, books read, workshops attended, and observations conducted. Penny also described professional development opportunities such as reading and attending workshops and staying on her principal's volunteer list when opportunities arose. In Penny's case, her most powerful learning came from the administrative internship she sought from the local university. This experience required that she have decision-making opportunities.

Patty and Amy conveyed their own experiences of learning, but with greater emphasis on how communication enhanced their practice and built their network of support. Patty and Amy both worked through cultural dissonance when relating to parents and working effectively with teams.

Negotiator. Negotiation is a form of communication that is distinguished by the persuasive influence of individuals to come to a common acceptance of agreeable terms within a group (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). Even though other participants shared examples of negotiation in their practice, Joan's life habit of negotiation set her apart from other participants. Joan had experiences negotiating early in life. She negotiated relationships (family, siblings, visiting international students), jobs (babysitting and nanny positions), contexts (living abroad and travelling) and school challenges (asking for help). Through these practices, Joan seemed to have built the ability to problem solve as well. In both her careers, she negotiated to find answers and to meet the needs of fellow workers. Joan transferred her negotiation skills to working through the difficulties presented to her in three urban teaching contexts. First, at Grady, when she saw she had

no like-minded peers, she chose to "build her own bubble" to create a manageable state of operation so that she could protect herself against practices and philosophies that did not coincide with her own. Second, while at Taylor, Joan teamed with her grade-level peers to negotiate with each other and the principal to establish an after school detention program. And third, when Joan transferred to Johnson Elementary School, she negotiated with her principal to suspend teacher leadership duties for a year so she could enjoy teaching and recuperate from the stress of work overload. Joan negotiated within each of these urban contexts until she could change her environment of operation.

Dorothy is the only other participant who emphasized the experience of negotiating varying contexts. All other participants at the time of this study had only taught in their present school. Dorothy's time as a military wife and her stint as a newspaper owner meant she experienced many context changes. She described the acclimation process she used to integrate herself into new school faculties and learn local expectations of her teacher role.

Amy and Patty excelled in negotiating with personnel and establishing relationships. Each shared connections with mentors and team members who supported them in their professional growth; but they also described examples of how they reciprocated in formal and informal ways. Amy and Penny both conveyed the value of relationships and the importance these held in their professional activities.

For Penny, a sense of negotiation was exhibited by the teaching and leadership skills she attained and utilized. Negotiating understandings and applying these skills were important to Penny's ability to share these skills with others. Penny's sense of

accomplishment seemed to be tied to her ability to implement these understandings and to negotiate the difficulties that challenging situations provided.

Servant. Describing her faith as the premise of all her life's actions, Amy viewed her work as an educator as a means to serve others as set forth by the principles of her faith. As previously discussed under the role of helper, Amy could not abandon this role in her professional capacity because of the commitment she has to serving. As part of our interviews, she shared how her work in the church and her work at school had the similar purpose of serving, but targeted the different needs of each group. Amy was straightforward in saying that she was careful to restrain her witnessing of faith; but she would not shirk from a discussion if the topic were broached by others.

From the perspective of a servant, Dorothy related her willingness to serve others, but, unlike Amy, she did not link faith to her orientation on serving. None of the other participants related faith or a servant mentality as they spoke of their urban teacher leadership development experiences. Amy stood out as the one teacher leader who expressed faith as a significant reason to practice the role of a servant.

Teacher. The role of teacher was ironically referenced by only one participant, and she was one of two who expressed an ultimate career goal of becoming a school administrator. Penny's strong mentoring skills were confirmation of her willingness to teach other teachers strategies to enhance their own practices. Her examples of hosting various teachers and working with university students demonstrated her practice of modeling instructional methods, sharing ideas and offering feedback on performance. Penny's acknowledgement of teaching as a career she "always wanted to do" exhibits her

commitment to her profession. Her willingness to work with adults was reinforced by the positive feedback she received from mentees, peers and her principal.

Even before Joan became an educator, she learned how to be a teacher. Joan's family was comprised of professionals working in medicine or education. Both parents shared teaching strategies and philosophies that influenced Joan as she grew up. Her father took her to classes with him, and her mother modeled strategies of behavior management in family life. Although Joan tried another professional field first, she could not escape her natural instincts and returned to teaching as a full-time professional. Unlike Penny, who knew that she wanted to be a teacher early in life, Joan had to take time to learn about herself before returning to education.

Dorothy, Patty, and Amy were more focused than Joan in determining their professional courses. Dorothy relied upon her family for input regarding her career, and according to her, career choices were limited in her generation. Taking her parents' advice, she went into education. Patty's parents had expected her to go into medicine all her life, but Patty's own discovery process pointed her toward education during her sophomore year of college. Amy shared that she had been diverted to social work by relying upon faulty information and found after completing a degree in social work that she could not ignore her desire to work with children in the field of education.

Summary of Role Identity Findings

My cross-case analysis revealed role identities that bridged the data on these urban teacher leaders. A different perspective on the participants as a whole is brought into focus through this analysis. The role identities of mentor, collaborator, helper,

learner, negotiator, servant, and teacher were salient at some level to all of the teacher leaders in this study.

The roles of mentor and collaborator emerged as the most significant for this group of participants. As mentors, these urban teacher leaders valued their personal experiences as mentees, which led to the support they now provide as mentors. Collaboration is exhibited in many forms and is woven throughout other salient roles in this study (i.e., mentoring, helping, learning negotiating, serving, and teaching). In the next section, cross-case findings related to distributed leadership are presented.

Findings Related to Distributed Leadership

Gronn (2002) described distributed leadership as either concertive or normative. Within the concertive definition, he asserted there are three categories of distributed leadership: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations, and institutionalized practices. These types of distributive leadership were used as a lens to examine how distributed leadership was enacted in participants' professional lives. Participants provided examples of spontaneous collaboration and intuitive working relations. Each participant was involved in a grade-level team at their current school, which qualified them as contributing toward institutionalized practices. These experiences were revealed in the cross-case analysis.

Spontaneous collaboration. Viewed as the most natural of form of distributed leadership, spontaneous collaboration can be regarded as a formalized term for the incidental interactions of two or more school personnel (Gronn, 2002). Amy spoke of how she informally worked with her grade-level peers to create synergy in completing

tasks. Penny shared how she and other new teachers banded together to locate resources and to find ways to address behavior issues. Patty accepted assistance from peers inside and outside her grade-level when she struggled to maintain an effective learning environment during her first year of teaching. In following years, she modeled spontaneous collaboration as she made herself available to new teachers for curriculum planning. Joan was initiated into her first school context where she began to collaborate with grade-level peers to plan instruction.

Intuitive working relations. Dorothy was the one participant who discussed working with a sustained group of people over the course of a number of years. Unlike other grade-level teams that were affected by teacher attrition, Dorothy's first grade team at Smith Elementary School was stable. This group of personnel chose to seek each other out and work for the good of the whole. As grade-level chair, Dorothy explained the team's delegation of tasks as something that each person chose as a matter of responsibility and ownership as a team member. As Dorothy discussed her role as a facilitator, she mentioned that it was also her job to make sure that no one sat on the bench. She equated her facilitator role with that of a coach who motivates, directs and encourages her team. Over the course of time, each team member grew to know the other teachers' strengths and preferences and a general working knowledge formed within the group. A natural working mode brought about habits of automaticity in their functioning as a group. From these intuitive working relations, the team developed into a productive unit that brought about cohesion and efficiency in use of time, resources, human capital, and professional support. As the team transitioned from a long-standing grade-level chair

to Dorothy, the team's cohesion was maintained due to Dorothy's understanding of the history and traditions of the team. Dorothy's tenure of leadership influenced the team through open communications and supportive coaching.

Context data indicated that Smith Elementary School employed a large population of White of teachers (49 in comparison to 15 minority teachers), with an average of 15 years of teaching experience. As noted in Chapter 2, teachers in urban schools are often predominantly young, White, middle class females (Haberman, 2005; Haberman & Rikards, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994) whose turnover rate is high (Crosby, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001), averaging only 3 -5 years of service (Haberman, 2005). Dorothy's grade-level team was atypical due to its ability to negotiate the urban school context over a period of time, including the cultural differences between faculty and students. Many variables could contribute to the team's constructive operation, but the collective work structure seemed to be a critical determinant of the group's success.

Institutionalized practices. Participants from each of the three schools served on grade-level teams and school leadership teams at some point in their careers. As a protocol mandated by the school system at the time of this study, all schools were required to provide common instructional planning time for grade-level members. Through these institutionalized practices, all the participants experienced formalized communication and planning. Their time as a team member prepared them to one day serve as the chair. Penny was appointed early as a grade-level chair, although the duties were later given to another team member. Penny related how she missed the leadership role and the sense of having an inside track to school related activities. Joan conceded

that her time in this role proved to be overwhelming as she tried to balance various roles in a school that was on the brink of reorganization. Amy felt supported by her team, but also looked to this group to provide additional assistance with her teacher leader tasks and responsibilities. Patty, like Penny, assumed her grade-level chair role early in her career. However, unlike Penny, Patty retained her role as chair and has continued to provide direction to her peers and other new teachers at Smith Elementary School. Dorothy reluctantly accepted her leadership role after a long-time grade-level chair vacated the position. Dorothy's acceptance was based on the premise that all team members remain involved and that she would facilitate activities as necessary.

Summary of Distributed Leadership Findings

The use of distributed leadership was found to be evident in the three forms Gronn (2002) described in the literature. Spontaneous collaboration, the most commonly used form, was recognized by teachers as part of their normal practice. Intuitive practice was determined to be the least used; but, it is one with the greatest potential since it is founded in relationships. The last form of distributed leadership, institutionalized practice, was exemplified by system structures like grade-level teams that organized school-related tasks.

Findings Related to Teacher Leadership

Several elements of participants' practice provided evidence associated with the theoretical construct of teacher leadership. These elements were identified as the most salient and consistently held generalizations across this group of teacher leaders. These elements generated further insight into the data from a collective perspective.

Teacher leaders exhibited a willingness to lead. Each of the participants revealed a willingness to lead. At the time of this study, most of the participants had taught between five and nine years. Only Dorothy had taught for over twenty-five years in the urban context. Since the majority of teachers were young, their leadership responsibilities had been given to them at an early stage in their careers. Only Dorothy indicated she accepted formal leadership responsibilities later in her career.

Without their willingness to accept responsibilities, they could not have become the teacher leaders they were. Their choices to engage in these activities seem to originate from their ability to help and care. Amy and Penny were explicit in their discussions of the responsibility they felt toward professional duties, which contributed to their willingness to lead. Amy, Dorothy, and Penny described their careers as teachers as priorities in their lives. All three self-identified as oldest children from traditional families who had been assigned responsibilities in their childhoods. From the practice of caring for siblings and others and being held accountable as the oldest, Dorothy, Amy and Penny continued these practices into their professional lives. The responsibility they exercised in the early stages of their lives gave them practice in making decisions and caring for and supervising others. Teacher leadership appears to be part of a progression in lives that have been focused on caring for others.

Patty and Joan turned from family career traditions of medicine and education to seek out their own professional paths. Although Joan came full circle by returning to education, Patty has not waivered and has continued on her own career path. Viewed as more independent than the others, these two participants were also middle children by

birth order. During their childhoods, Patty and Joan sought opportunities to experience diverse people in their formative years. As they matured, each worked in the urban context in volunteer capacities and each maintained that she had exemplary mentors who taught in urban schools. During the first two years of their careers, they both experienced growth in classroom management and were later recognized for their abilities to effectively manage a classroom. Realizing they had important information to share with others, and with encouragement from their principals, Patty and Joan gained confidence. Their confidence enabled them to share with other new teachers who experienced difficulties with behavior management. Their desire to help others prompted them to share and assist those who were in need, just as they had once been. Their willingness to lead was prompted by their willingness to share their struggles and newly embraced classroom successes.

Self-efficacy led to teacher leaders' confidence in all aspects of their work. Self-efficacy is a person's belief of his/her capability to perform a particular task (Bandura, 1982). Each of these participants shared examples of self-efficacy through the course of their narratives. Little evidence was provided of participants' declining opportunities to lead (except when burnout was imminent or when an administrator recognized the need to share leadership opportunities). When participants accepted new tasks that they had not attempted before, a sense of confidence emerged in how they approached the new activity. They all referenced previous life experiences to problem-solve and communicate in order to address these tasks. Their self-efficacy also enhanced

their capacity for self-empowerment and their ability to contribute to classroom and school activities.

Each teacher leader, regardless of her length of service, demonstrated the abilities to take initiative, problem-solve and locate information for others. Patty, Joan, Amy, Dorothy and Penny all demonstrated a volunteer spirit by taking on tasks and helping. This deep determination to assist others meant another time commitment on their part. Seeing themselves as individuals who are able to assist and resolve other teachers' dilemmas, these five teacher leaders' persistence is evidence of their self-efficacy and the responsibility they feel about helping others and acting as a resource to their peers.

Teaching takes priority over leadership duties. Each participant of this study expressed her commitment to teaching as her first priority, even though they all admitted that leadership activities impacted their instructional time with students. Dorothy, Joan, and Amy were the most adamant about focusing upon their classroom time and the need to reserve their leadership tasks for non-instructional time. The two participants who viewed administration as future career options, Patty and Penny, confirmed that their duties as teachers were sometimes impacted because leadership activities infringed upon instructional time. These two participants conveyed concerns over the time dedicated to students and to the responsibilities they held as teacher leaders. Although this conflict between roles posed challenges, Penny and Patty seemed content in balancing the duties of the dual roles, while maintaining that their first responsibilities as teachers were to their students.

Classroom management is a skill valued by teacher leaders. Expressed as a critical habit of teacher leaders, classroom management held significant connotations for these participants. Joan and Dorothy were the most outspoken of the group concerning the importance of classroom management. They shared not only what classroom management meant with regards to instruction, but what strength in this practice meant as teacher leaders. For Joan, to be an effective teacher, classroom management was the most critical practice to be mastered. She believed that behavior management is the signifier of a teacher's ability to lead within and outside the classroom. According to Joan, if teacher leaders do not have classroom management skills, then teachers cannot be viewed as leaders. From another perspective, Dorothy viewed her classroom management skills as a means to support and assist peers who struggled in this area. Her willingness to address challenging students and to provide relief to frustrated teachers demonstrated her abilities as a teacher who maintained order and structure to promote learning. Dorothy understood the needs of faltering teachers when student behavior became too great of a challenge. Dorothy's confidence of her own abilities of classroom management, associated with her empathy and care, prompted her to react to situations where she felt compelled to contribute.

Patty and Penny described their initial struggles with behavior management as they began teaching in the urban context. Both teacher leaders received assistance from peers and initiated their own readings and professional development in this area. From their experiences of not understanding how to hold students accountable, Patty and Penny developed empathy for other new teachers who demonstrated a lack of behavior

management knowledge. Their new understandings prompted them to assist other beginning teachers and to support grade-level peers. Amy also commented on the support she received and how she assisted others. As with Patty, Penny, and Dorothy, Amy's contribution to others' understandings arose from empathy and a willingness to help.

Communication is the means by which teacher leaders negotiate their contexts. Receptive and interactive communication strategies were noted by teacher leaders as important to understanding and working within their contexts. Listening and observing were discussed as two critical receptive communication tools that Joan, Patty, and Dorothy used to learn about their contexts and connect with their co-workers. All the participants of this study used interactive communication strategies of encouragement, persuasion, negotiation, and constructive feedback. Dorothy, Joan, Patty, Amy and Penny also used communication skills such as questioning and probing to gain clarity in challenging situations.

Dorothy described her communication skills most carefully. In identifying communication strategies she used with her principal and her grade-level team, Dorothy explained her approach to sharing perspectives and acting as an information facilitator. Her diplomatic skills promoted understanding and open communication between personnel. Dorothy was recognized as a resource capable of mediating meetings, easing tensions and acting as a student and family advocate. As a good communicator, Dorothy extended her role set to include peacekeeper and interpreter in her school context.

Joan and Penny referenced their communication skills with peers. Their descriptions of working with co-workers included seeking input and providing assistance

to others. Noting observation as an important tool, Joan and Penny provided examples of their ability to read situations in order to make good decisions about future practice. Neither participant expressed hesitancy in seeking out information to improve practice.

Patty and Amy also engaged others without hesitancy when seeking answers for peers and themselves. Describing their need to find answers for others, each valued the perception that they were resources for others. Patty and Amy worked to overcome timidity early in their careers, and both have asserted themselves within their learning communities. Their growth in confidence has improved their abilities to express their knowledge and opinions to peers and others.

Learning generates knowledge that leads to improved practice. Patty, Dorothy, Joan, and Penny viewed learning as an on-going activity to improve professional skills and performance. Professional development strategies such as collecting and creating professional files, staying abreast of current educational issues, attending and facilitating workshops, and independently researching topics critical to their students' needs were strategies they used to inform and enhance their practice as educators. Initially, Patty relied upon peers to receive feedback on her daily classroom practices. Her secondary forms of learning came from formal professional development seminars and her self-initiated readings. Dorothy explicitly declared her love of learning and how she relished the satisfaction of becoming a better educator throughout her career. Although Joan shared her struggles as a student, she explained her practice of keeping her own professional development files filled with research strategies, attending workshops, and reading books to improve her skills in the classroom.

Penny shared her personal journey of evolving from an accomplished student to a professional educator. Penny's commitment to learning is demonstrated via the recognition she has earned as a professional development facilitator. Penny's opportunities for learning have also been increased by her availability to attend professional development workshops because she has fewer time constraints outside of her teaching day. Unlike other participants, Amy's discussion of learning was more implicit. Little mention was made of her formal teacher and teacher leadership development; but she focused primarily upon learning new leadership tasks as part of on the job training. As further evidence of their willingness to learn, Dorothy, Penny, Patty, Joan, and Amy completed advanced degrees.

Teacher leaders and administrators can work as resources for each other. The influence of administrators was viewed as important by each of the participants of this study. For Penny, her administrator was held in high esteem because of the opportunities she had been given by her principal and the trust she felt her principal had shown her. Amy, Patty, and Dorothy saw their roles as network links to facilitate communication between various school personnel, provide feedback on school activities, and interconnect the grade-level team members to other school personnel. Joan's perspective took a broader perspective as she discussed her administrators in the four contexts of her teaching career. Joan's appreciation for high expectations, strong work habits, and the ability to meet her professional needs were administrator qualities that she indicated were important to her. At the time of this study, all of the participants viewed

their relationships with their principals as positive and productive. They all conveyed that they felt a sense of support in their interactions with their principals.

Furthermore, two of the participants had attained degrees in administration and anticipated transitions into more formal roles of leadership later in their careers. These two participants' sense of formal leadership was enhanced by administrative internships, which broadened their understanding of the level of decision-making, tasks, responsibility, communication, collaboration, and role-taking involved in formal school leadership. Their experiences as administrative interns allowed them to see their roles as resources to the leaders of their schools and to learn how integral working relations are enhanced by relationships.

Summary of Teacher Leadership Findings

The findings related to teacher leadership reflect the most commonly held ideas from these five participants. Although many other points were discussed and are worthy for further examination in another study, these were determined to be the most salient generalizations found in the narratives and analyses of this research. A willingness to lead, strong self-efficacy, teaching as a priority, communication, effective classroom management, the importance of learning to promote improved practice, and the value of synergy between teacher leaders and administrators surfaced as topics teacher leaders emphasized as critical to their work.

Findings Related to Urban Teacher Leadership

The theoretical construct of urban teacher leadership adds another lens through which to examine ideas and actions of the participants of this study. Cultural

competence, the value of community involvement, and the capacity for teacher leaders to bracket their classroom responsibilities were three key elements identified in the data. These findings provided insight into teacher leaders' abilities to negotiate the demands of working in urban schools.

Cultural competence reflects teacher leaders' inclusion of all learning community partners. As Haberman (2005) noted, the majority of urban teachers are White, middle class females who have limited experiences within urban schools. Such is the case with this study's participants. Only two participants, Joan and Dorothy, discussed early life experiences that created opportunities for them to interact with people from outside their own race and culture. Joan experienced diversity through hosting exchange students and living abroad. Dorothy lived through the time of school desegregation and the Vietnam War. As a military wife, she and her family associated with soldiers' families from many different backgrounds. The early experiences in Joan and Dorothy's lives suggest that their exposure to people from many different walks of life enhanced their abilities to communicate with families and students of diverse backgrounds.

Penny, Patty and Amy grew up in homogeneous communities. All noted that their college experiences provided the greatest exposure to diversity to that point in their lives. In their first year of teaching, Patty and Amy had lessons to learn in regards to understanding perspectives of individuals from less dominant cultures. For Patty and Amy, confrontations with angry parents were not easy. After the first time that each was verbally confronted by culturally different parents, they learned that listening without

interruption was the best method to diffuse anger and show respect to parents. Showing respect and acknowledging parents' perspectives, while maintaining a professional demeanor, were skills that they learned were important for effective communications. Penny did not describe any confrontations, but her understanding of students' lives has helped her to realize that she had a significantly different upbringing than her students. Discussions with students of the hardships they encounter have focused Penny's attention on how she can best serve students through her teaching.

Urban communities and parent involvement are valued by teacher leaders. Dorothy, Joan and Patty have embraced their school communities, as demonstrated through their stories of involvement in student and family activities. In doing so, they have displayed caring, interest, avoidance of fear and stereotypes (Sanders, 1999), and a willingness to open themselves to relationships. Through these relationships, they have made connections with families, and these connections have had positive effects in their classrooms. Dorothy and Patty told of shopping in their school communities and attending weddings, funerals, and sporting events. Patty and Joan related how their phone calls and home visits were important to initiating relationships each new school year and how they had experienced successful parent participation at conference time.

For Amy and Penny, the importance of community was defined by the role it played in sustaining and improving their schools' reputations. Both Amy and Penny were concerned about the negative perceptions of urban schools held by the community-at-large. Feelings of frustration mixed with pride were evident as they related the need for community members to see the accomplishments of students and witness the quality

teaching that takes place. Amy and Penny were adamant about the power of the community to influence how people perceived the schools and the role they played as teacher leaders to influence perceptions for the better. Describing their strategies of positively sharing information and modeling appropriate professional behavior, each has felt a sense of accomplishment in diminishing the negativity that impacts their school culture.

To maintain healthy perspectives, teacher leaders devised personal coping strategies to manage stress generated by their work experiences. Participants discussed strategies they incorporated to remain focused on their teaching and to protect themselves from internalizing negative urban experiences. Strategies such as bracketing, reflection, and faith, were three means by which participants protected their psychological well-being. Joan and Penny utilized bracketing as their method of coping. Dorothy and Patty focused on strategies of reflection to process the challenges of working with urban students and families. Amy relied upon her faith to manage the stresses she experienced in her school context.

Bracketing is the ability of individuals to suppress personal perspectives in given situations (Hochschild, 1983; 1990). Joan and Penny utilized this strategy to focus their behaviors and emotions on their work as teachers. Fineman (1993) and Mumby and Putnam (1992) explain that controlling one's emotions is regarded as strength in organizational settings. Bracketing enabled Joan and Penny to focus on their work as a way to remain mentally positive and emotionally stable while at school. Each shared her own struggles and identified the ability to bracket as a coping strategy necessary to

continue in the urban context. Joan also discussed her reflection process as a means to decompress outside the school environment, releasing tensions and concerns that she could not easily process.

Dorothy and Patty used reflection as their means to think through, understand, analyze, strategize, and release tensions from their school days. Patty spoke of using her commuter time to process events of the day and plan how to address issues. Thinking while driving and later making notes helped her to process events and set goals to work toward. Dorothy described her habit of reflection as an on-going process that she carried over into her summer breaks, allowing her to delve deeper into student and school issues.

Amy's faith was a major factor in her ability to sustain her urban professional practices. Confident she is in the right place, Amy discussed how her life was filled with work and church activities, which left little time of her own. Her time in worship and church-related activities provided her an outlet to express faith and seek hope in relation to the challenges of her life and to her profession. Amy's commitment to contributing to church activities has been a lifelong habit and has provided sustenance to all aspects of her life.

Summary of Urban Teacher Leadership Findings

Points related to cultural competence, community importance, and coping strategies reveal salient components of participants' practices in the urban environment. Teacher leaders sought ways to overcome cultural boundaries in order to engage families and community members. Interacting in community contexts outside of school created bonds with students and demonstrated teacher leaders' willingness to be a part of

community life. Although communities were valued by teacher leaders, the stress of the challenges of students' lives added another dimension to their roles as urban educators. Teacher leaders devised personal strategies of bracketing, reflection, and faith to effectively cope with urban stresses. Next, I will identify and discuss the conclusions of this study.

Conclusions

Findings from this study have been reported based on three forms of analysis. In Chapter 4, I reported the results from a narrative analysis and an analysis of narratives. In the first part of Chapter 5, outcomes from a cross-case analysis were described. The following section lays out a set of conclusions that I have derived from examining the findings reported earlier. Conclusions are listed, and then each one is explained. After the discussion of conclusions, I will present a set of recommendations.

Based on my findings, I have made the following conclusions that are related to role identity, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, and urban teacher leadership.

The following are conclusions related to role identity:

- My participants viewed themselves as teachers first and teacher leaders second.
- Participants in this study displayed role-taking and commitment that contributed to their self-efficacy.

The following are conclusions related to distributed leadership:

- These teacher leaders utilized formal and informal means to meet the demands of their urban contexts.
- These teacher leaders had constructive working relationships with school administrators.

The following are conclusions related to teacher leadership:

- Teacher leaders in this study exhibited a willingness to lead.
- Mentoring played an important role in the development of these urban teacher leaders.

The following are conclusions related to urban teacher leadership are:

- These urban teacher leaders worked to overcome cultural differences and improve the life chances of students and families.
- My participants devised personal coping strategies to manage stress generated at work.

Conclusions Related to Role Identity

The participants in this study viewed themselves as teachers first and teacher leaders second. Teacher leaders found their students and classrooms to be their primary responsibilities. Each participant was clear in her commitment to attending to students' needs first. Narratives of these teachers' perceptions revealed deep caring and a compelling desire to provide support to their students. Urban teacher leaders in this study shared the ideals of serving children while holding high expectations for student learning. Teacher leaders shared instances of dealing with complex student issues. At times, they were required to read beneath the surface of student misbehaviors to decode motives behind poor behavior choices. These teacher leaders operated from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) to meet students' physical and emotional needs in order to prepare them for learning. When home issues carried over into the school day, teacher leaders understood that resolving these issues took precedence over instruction and leadership duties.

Although teachers' commitment to their students took precedence, teacher leaders discussed their struggles with time and expressed their concerns about having to choose between instruction and school-level responsibilities. As in Ovando (1996) and Suranna and Moss' (2000) work, the conflict of managing dual roles challenged teacher leaders' ability to budget time. This conflict generated feelings of guilt due to time spent away from teaching and instructional planning. Teacher leaders developed anxiety about how to find ways to fulfill responsibilities of both of these roles. Time management was fundamental to their efficiency and completion of tasks as they attempted to retain their focus on their primary roles as teachers.

Participants in this study displayed role-taking and commitment that contributed to their self-efficacy. Each participant exhibited an ability to look beyond her own perspective to take on the perspectives of others. By looking through the lenses of others, they have demonstrated the ability to role-take. According to Mead (1934), Stryker (1962), and Schwalbe (1988), role–taking is the understanding of individuals as they imagine and empathize with other people's thoughts, emotions, and actions. Role-taking allowed these teacher leaders to view other learning community members' outlooks in regard to their actions in the school context. Role-taking appears to be central to their ability to communicate and change in response to the demands of their school context. Because of their role-taking ability, participants are able to communicate, negotiate, problem-solve and change professional actions based on situational demands.

These participants also displayed a deep commitment to their roles as teachers and teacher leaders. Stryker and Serpe (1982) describe commitment as people's investments

in their roles as influenced by their relationships with others in their lived contexts. People who exhibit commitment to a role frequently utilize the role in accordance with the success they attain from it. These two factors influence the levels of commitment that individuals develop. Teacher leaders in this study frequently interchanged their roles as teachers and teacher leaders. The positive reinforcement they gained from their leadership work not only encouraged them, but it created greater levels of commitment to both their professional roles.

From the positive experiences of role commitment, confidence and self-efficacy developed. As Bandura (1982) asserts, not only is self-efficacy tied into how well individuals perceive they are able to accomplish a task, but "how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles" (p. 123). For these teacher leaders, commitment to their roles as teacher leaders reinforced their work ethic and task persistence. As teacher leaders' satisfaction of tasks rose, so did their commitments to their roles as teacher leaders.

Conclusions Related to Distributed Leadership

These teacher leaders utilized formal and informal means to meet the demands of their urban contexts. Based on my findings, I conclude that the teacher leaders in my study utilized two main forms of distributed leadership: institutionalized practice and spontaneous interactions (Gronn, 2002). For the most part, teacher leaders have operated from institutionalized practice such as the grade-level teams, school improvement committees and leadership teams. This form of distributed leadership

provided structured means to organize and disburse duties. Spontaneous collaboration, on the other hand, provided a means to address needs as they arose.

Because urban schools have higher faculty turnover rates than other schools, the ability to form relationships and sustain cooperative activities is limited. As Gronn (2002) suggests, the length of time it takes to develop understandings of personnel skills and abilities is important to the success of intuitive working relations. Although it was the least practiced form of distributed leadership in this study, intuitive relationships appear to hold promise for delegating tasks, creating effective work groups, and maximizing the abilities of all personnel. Only one participant engaged in this form of distributive leadership due to her lengthy tenure and stability of her grade-level team. For the potential of distributed leadership to be fulfilled, intuitive working relations must be promoted. As teacher turnover in urban schools continues (Crosby, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001), so will the likelihood that that this type of distributed leadership will not be fully developed. This will continue to impede the development of leadership capacity in urban schools.

These teacher leaders had constructive working relationships with school administrators. In building networks of support, teacher leaders also sought out school administrators. School administrators involved these teacher leaders as school decision makers. Through sharing the decision-making process, teachers and administrators gained insight into each other's work habits, school visions, and expectations. Although at the time of this study, teacher leaders' relationships with their principals were reported as constructive and encouraging, no teacher leader named their principal's influence as

the sole reason they chose to lead. Rather, teacher leaders identified the leadership opportunities principals had made available to them and the open communication they experienced with their principals as important factors. This challenges Smylie's (1992b) assertion that principal influence is the single greatest factor that prompts teachers to lead. Although principals have authority and decision-making abilities in schools, teacher leaders must recognize and enact their own desires to make the decision to step outside their classroom boundaries to participate in broader responsibilities as school leaders and decision-makers. Once again, I believe that the level of caring and sense of responsibility these teacher leaders exhibited was the critical influence in their decisions to become school leaders. For these teacher leaders, principals provided encouragement and opportunities to develop and refine their skills as leaders in formal and informal ways.

In the formal sense, teacher leaders in this study were encouraged by their principals to seek out advanced degrees in order to improve in their leadership prospects. Most informal leadership activities were completed in-house to facilitate school-level work in grade-level teams and school committees. Teacher leaders acted as interpreters in sharing information and collaborating to satisfy requirements handed down by principals. Enacting a go-between role gave teacher leaders practice in communication skills through which they acted as interpreters between teachers and principals. Unlike Troen and Boles' (1992) findings, where teacher leaders felt isolated and alone in their work, these teacher leaders did not discuss any marginalization from peers due to working directly with principals. I believe this to be true since most of the participants had served as team leaders and because of the positive relationships they had with their grade-level peers.

Communications between teacher leaders and principals were considered open processes, in which teachers felt comfortable offering feedback. Teacher leaders expressed that they were comfortable discussing issues and school problems with their principals. Teacher leaders offered insights from both their roles as teachers and teacher leaders for principals to consider. Once again, their abilities to shift in roles and to role-take were utilized to support their work as teacher leaders.

Conclusions Related to Teacher Leadership

Mentoring played an important role in the development of these urban teacher leaders. Weiss and Weiss (1999) assert that well-organized mentoring programs are not typical; in fact, they are the exception. Such is the case with these teacher leaders. Although little mention was made of formal mentoring programs, teacher leaders relied upon their relationships at school to gain support. Their actions follow Weiss and Weiss's suggestion that urban teachers must be willing to seek support from others if they are to meet the multifaceted challenges of their students.

Teacher leaders in this study sought out other teachers with whom to network and collaborate for instructional and school related activities. They also connected with others in order to attain emotional support. My participants valued relationships and used them to create support networks that allowed them to work outside the parameters of mandated requirements. Teacher leaders demonstrated their abilities to seek out others to receive assistance and to serve as resources. Through networking, teacher leaders relied upon relationships to problem solve, brainstorm, confront challenging situations, share concerns, and offer and receive constructive feedback. Communication strategies such as

observation, persuasion, negotiation, interpretation, and listening were all important skills that teacher leaders used to generate and build support to within in their school contexts.

As developing teachers, these teacher leaders had received mentoring early in their careers. These teacher leaders shared early career experiences that built empathy for new teachers and prompted them to follow the same path as mentors. They understood that seeking assistance was not a weakness, but an important step to gaining insights from different perspectives. By seeking out the help of others, they also gained efficiency by relying on the knowledge of experienced peers instead of time-consuming trial and error. The willingness of teacher leaders' mentors to share and create an inclusive and encouraging environment set the tone for their perceptions of the value and importance of mentoring. Because of these early meaningful experiences, these teacher leaders provided mentoring to other new teachers. They gave back to the profession by serving as guides and mentors to others who were new to urban schools.

Teacher leaders exhibited a willingness to lead. The whole impetus for teachers adding the role of teacher leader to their professional responsibility hinged on their decision to lead. Without feeling compelled to take on added leadership responsibilities, these teachers would simply be teachers. Why they chose to step outside the expectations of their roles as teachers to assume responsibilities that impact, not only students, but other adults in school environments was based upon individual values and priorities. I believe that the teacher leaders in my study had a strong sense of responsibility and an ethic of care (Palmer, 1997). These teachers sought to advise, assist, perform tasks for others, act as go-betweens for different personnel, and facilitate activities when needed.

Driven to seek solutions and resolve issues, these teacher leaders demonstrated self-efficacy and confidence as they informally and formally worked to improve their students' learning and the status of the schools in which they worked.

From their sense of responsibility and care for others, teacher leaders exhibited strong work ethics, commitment to their schools, pride and ownership in their accomplishments, perseverance in completing tasks, abilities to establish relationships, habits of professional development, and the capacity to identify organizational, professional and personal needs of others. These skills provide evidence that change and learning are vital activities for these teacher leaders. This matches Harris and Muijs's (2005) conclusion that teacher leaders act as catalysts and managers of change. Research from Fullan, Cuttress, and Kilcher (2005) also suggests that for change to be possible, leaders must exhibit a moral purpose, demonstrate commitment, enact on-going learning, and persist in attention to tasks. All of the teacher leaders of this study demonstrated these positive attributes, which enabled them to contribute to change and underscored their willingness to lead.

Conclusions Related to Urban Teacher Leadership

These urban teacher leaders worked to overcome cultural differences and improve the life chances of students and families. Diamond, Randolph, and Spillane (2004), Gay (2000), Ladson-Billings (1994), McKinney, Fuller, Hancock, and Audette (2006), Milner (2006), and Skrla and Scheurich (2001) contend that teachers' levels of cultural competence (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, Isaacs, 1989) influence students' learning. Since these teacher leaders were White and from middle-class backgrounds, their

knowledge of the students they served at the time of this study was something that had been learned on the job. Prior to gaining some level of cultural competence, participants shared interactions with parents that were initially challenging; but over time, they have come to better understand family and community expectations with regards to communication, social interactions, and partnerships.

These urban teachers have developed an ability to role-take through a cultural lens. Teacher leaders' abilities to role-take are especially important because of the difference in race between these teacher leaders and the majority of students and families they serve. Landsman (2006) and Hill-Jackson (2007) contend that White educators "view the world through a single-consciousness" (p. 144). In doing so, they are not able to gain cultural competence and are, thus, less effective as urban teachers. Price (2006) continues with a similar supposition that White teachers cannot understand needs of non-White students. The teacher leaders of my study challenge the notion of White teachers' inability to teach Black students. Even more, these teachers have gone beyond the expectations of the classroom to advance their leadership skills, showing that White school leaders can be effective in Black schools.

Evidence of these White teacher leaders' cultural competence is demonstrated by the family and community partnerships they have formed. Through these partnerships and relationships with students' families, teacher leaders have learned to value families and communities as resources. In addition to actively seeking families to participate in student conferences and calling upon families to support the learning process, teacher leaders have participated in community events that have demonstrated openness, trust,

and respect, to families within their school communities. Building these relationships has generated credibility and respect from families and members of the community.

My participants devised personal coping strategies to manage stress generated at work. The multifaceted complexities of urban schools create varying levels of stress for teacher leaders. This stress comes in different forms and has been associated with high attrition rates (Haberman, 2005). The research of Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005), Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995), Weiner (1999) suggest that educators must work to diffuse the barriers that perpetuate the challenge of retaining quality teachers.

In this study, stressors such as student misbehavior, instructional accountability, insufficient time and students' life challenges were highlighted by teacher leaders as primary causes of tension. Two stressors that especially created anxiety for teacher leaders were the overload of work involved in balancing classroom responsibilities and school-wide duties and dealing with the life challenges of urban students. Teacher leaders described coping strategies for how they dealt with these challenges to protect themselves. Unlike many young educators who choose to leave teaching early in their careers, these participants shared positive strategies they used to process daily stresses and remain in the urban context.

Teacher leaders practiced three strategies for relieving the stress of work overload and the challenges of urban schools. These coping strategies were bracketing, reflection, and faith. Bracketing allows individuals to maintain focus on particular actions that are important to meeting goals. Although these teacher leaders were compassionate

regarding their students' personal needs, they focused on their responsibilities as teachers to address the learning goals of their students. Reflection offered another way to process school experiences, analyzing situations, and considering options to improve practice. As reflective practitioners, these teacher leaders used this strategy as a form of self-assessment to resolve issues. The final strategy, the application of faith, was another way of processing events to seek personal and professional improvement. These strategies have become habits in the participants' professional lives and have provided positive means for coping with urban school challenges.

Summary

The conclusions of this study indicate that these teacher leaders are teachers first. Although they are committed to their roles as teacher leaders, the salience of their role as teacher is paramount. Teacher leaders in this study also demonstrated a willingness to lead that was driven by their levels of commitment, responsibility, and caring. Their work in the urban context was complimented by their abilities to role-take, which enabled them to take on the perspectives of others to enhance communication and develop cultural competence. Their self-efficacy gave them the confidence to network and establish relationships across their learning communities. In their role as teacher leaders, they have practiced distributed leadership through spontaneous interactions and institutionalized practice. As a form of spontaneous interaction, teacher leaders have met the needs of new teachers by offering support. As former mentees, they understand the importance of mentoring and what support means to their own success as teachers. Understanding that relationships with administrators are another source of support,

teacher leaders in this study collaborated with administrators to contribute to the inner-workings of their schools. Teacher leaders also shared ways through which they supported themselves by creating coping strategies to deal with the stresses of working in urban schools. I now present recommendations for urban school administrators, urban teacher leaders, teacher and school leader preparation institutions, and researchers.

Recommendations

The narratives and other findings of this study provided rich descriptions that made it possible to: (a) examine possible mechanisms for encouraging leadership assertion choices; (b) identify support practices for encouraging leadership development in future urban teachers; and (c) provide insight for education leaders who coordinate teacher and leadership preparation and professional development activities. Recommendations for urban school urban administrators, teacher leaders, teacher and administrator preparation institutions, and researchers are described in the following sections. Recommendations are listed, and then discussions of each recommendation follow.

The following are recommendations from my study for urban school administrators:

- School systems should adopt specialized training for teachers to help them understand the nuances of community and cultural norms reflected in urban schools.
- School systems should assess the role-taking abilities of prospective teacher candidates.
- Principals should utilize distributed leadership to broaden the scope of work assignments and include greater participation across school personnel.

- Administrators should be cognizant of the workload of teacher leaders and compensate them accordingly.

- School systems should incorporate mentoring strategies to support teacher and teacher leadership growth.

The following are recommendations for urban teacher leaders:

- Urban teacher leaders should learn to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments.

- Urban teacher leaders should develop constructive working relationships with their principals.

- Urban teacher leaders should nurture mentoring relationships.

- Urban teacher leaders should embrace the realities of constant change.

The following are recommendations for institutions that prepare teachers and administrators:

- Teacher education programs should incorporate self-efficacy development into their curricula.

- Teacher education and school leadership programs should emphasize the importance of mentoring in their coursework and practica.

- Teacher education and school leadership programs should collaborate in the preparation of teacher leaders.

The following are recommendations for researchers studying teacher leadership:

- Educational researchers should incorporate qualitative approaches when studying teacher leadership.

- Educational researchers should utilize narrative approaches to study leadership development.

- Educational researchers should concentrate more attention on the study of urban teacher leadership.

Recommendations for Urban School Administrators

School systems should adopt specialized training for teachers to help them understand the nuances of community and cultural norms reflected in urban schools. As Haberman (2005), Haberman and Rikards (1990) and Ladson-Billings (1994) assert, the majority of urban teachers have different cultural backgrounds and often do not live in the same school communities as the children and families with whom they work. Delpit (1995), Ladson-Billings (1995), and Nieto (1999) contend that teachers are challenged by social differences and cultural unfamiliarity. Due to these barriers, young urban teacher often leave the profession early, creating high turnover rates (Crosby, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001). To address these cultural disconnects and associated high attrition rates, I recommend that school systems initiate training for teachers that will address cultural dissonance and social differences. Gaining cultural competence while learning about such issues as poverty, discrimination, social justice and community concerns can provide a framework of understanding for teachers and promote their retention in the urban context, thus increasing the chances that they will eventually transform into urban teacher leaders. If training can impact retention rates of teachers, then the likelihood of strengthening leadership capacity could also be positively influenced.

School systems should assess the role-taking abilities of prospective teacher candidates. This study identifies role-taking as a critical ability that teacher leaders need. To understand the perspectives of others is essential to productive communication and the development of cultural competence, and human resource departments in school systems should work to asses this skill in potential candidates. To do this, instrumentation

to measure prospective teacher candidates' role-taking abilities should be identified. Results should be thoughtfully analyzed and personnel assignments adjusted based on candidates' role-taking skills. For those individuals who demonstrate these skills, consideration should be given for specialized training and school assignments. Special training could address cultural competence awareness, social justice issues, culturally relevant teaching strategies, and decision-making practices. The specialized training could create opportunities for an examination of working in the urban context, with focus on reflection and interaction with school and community members.

Principals should utilize distributed leadership to broaden the scope of work assignments and include greater participation across school personnel. According to Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, and Yashkina, (2007), the recent literature demonstrates the influence distributed leadership and teacher leadership have upon each other. If as Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) suggests, teacher leadership is an underutilized resource, then it is plausible that distributed leadership suffers the same fate. The data collected from my study confirm this. Participants' data indicated that distributed leadership was not being utilized to its fullest potential. In this study, spontaneous interactions and institutionalized practices were the primary forms of distributed leadership used by teacher leaders.

To address this paucity of distributed leadership, I recommend that administrators throughout school systems learn more about the concept of shared leadership. Next, school principals should work to ensure that their teachers also learn about the distributed leadership concept, its possibilities, roles and responsibilities, and its potential for

improving the teaching-learning process. As principals and teachers work to make leadership action a focused and consistent practice, constant assessment in the form of observations and conversations should take place among all parties.

Administrators should be cognizant of the workload of teacher leaders and compensate them accordingly. Teacher leaders in this study discussed the overload of leadership responsibilities as an added stressor in their work. Often staying after school to complete tasks or working on leadership duties during non-instructional time, teacher leaders felt they had not been fairly compensated for their efforts. Feelings of frustration and irritation with the overload of tasks that consumed free time were apparent. To ease these feelings of frustration, I recommend that compensation in the form of compensated time (i.e., after school leadership task time would be compensated/traded for contractual time) and/or benefits (e.g., fiscal rewards, instructional materials, professional conferences) would encourage goodwill and persistence among teacher leaders. More importantly, the effects might encourage the extension of professional careers.

School systems should incorporate mentoring strategies to support teacher and teacher leadership growth. According to Tillman (2005), formalized mentoring programs promote "collaborative partnerships in which individuals develop mutual interests" (p. 611). Mentoring was not described as a formal activity for these teacher leaders, but as an informal activity. Mentoring was such a powerful experience for these teacher leaders that they all have transitioned from mentees to mentors. In this supportive role as mentors, teacher leaders found themselves working in informal capacities to assist new teachers. Their belief of the importance of mentoring is a strong

testament to the positive effects mentoring contributed to their development as teachers and teacher leaders.

If formalized mentoring were in place, a focused impact on new teachers learning could be made, and planned mentoring strategies and experiences could also promote teacher leadership. As a more proactive approach to gaining professional knowledge, formal mentoring strategies could move teacher learning to a more professional level. Also, as a formalized activity, administrative input and support could be infused to enhance communication and leadership strategies throughout schools. Creating a network of support through formalized mentoring could create a richer resource for all teachers to call upon.

Recommendations for Urban Teacher Leaders

Urban teacher leaders should learn to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments. Although much of the discussions about urban schools in this report focus on challenges for teacher leaders, there were moments when teacher leaders shared uplifting stories about their urban teaching experiences. These uplifting experiences were meaningful and were shared with excitement and pride. As I listened to their stories, it became evident that recognizing the good things about their work was something that they, and others, needed to do. It struck me that little time was allowed to celebrate the successes of urban school teaching.

Urban teacher leaders need positive reinforcement to build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), strengthen role commitment (Burke, 2006), create learning communities (Hord, 2008), sustain perseverance (Bandura, 1982) and maintain hope (Crowther, Ferguson,

and Hann, 2009). Recognition is a prime means to give positive reinforcement to urban teacher leaders. To build a true learning community, a culture of caring must be generated. Recognition in the form of celebrations is important to establishing and maintaining a positive school climate.

Urban teacher leaders should develop constructive working relationships with their principals. When teacher leaders become involved in school activities, principals have the opportunity to learn of their interests and talents. As Smylie (1992a) concluded, teachers who had more positive interactions with their principals experienced greater participation in school decision-making processes. Establishing relationships that work toward building credibility and trust between teachers and principals is critical to principals' assignment of teachers to decision-making activities.

Participation in distributed leadership is a more formalized approach to establishing strong working relationships with principals. Gronn's (2002) most formalized concept of distributed leadership, institutionalized practice, is a framework for urban teachers to work with others in structured capacities. These structured capacities provide the environment for urban teacher leaders to demonstrate their capabilities, which could lead to further involvement in other school tasks that hold potential to contribute to improving existing relationships.

Urban teacher leaders should nurture mentoring relationships. Urban teacher leaders of this study described their mentoring relationships and how these relationships impacted their professional practices. Teacher leaders in this study accepted mentoring and performed mentoring. Their ability to rely upon a peer to more effectively operate is

parallel to teachers having professional consultants to guide them. Mentoring should be considered a collaborative process that continues throughout teachers' lives, with giving or receiving support being determined by situational demands and stages of development. Mentors in this study exhibited an ethic of caring that complimented their instructional and professional expertise. As discussed by study participants, the ability to survive in the urban context was attributed to strong mentoring. Such support cannot be ignored and should be sought by all teachers, especially urban teachers who may not understand the complexities of an unfamiliar culture and community. The added support of mentoring can determine, according to Lortie (1975), whether a teacher "sinks or swims" (p. 71). I recommend that urban teacher leaders remain open to mentoring as a resource throughout their careers.

Urban teacher leaders should embrace the realities of constant change. The narratives of these urban teacher leaders repeatedly alluded to the demands and fast-paced schedules of their work environment. From the high-mobility rates of students to the stress of meeting state and federal mandates, urban schools face many challenges. As discussed in the review of literature, challenges of the urban context such as poverty, limited health care, child abuse, crime, and family fragmentation (Anyon, 1997; Noguera, 2003; Talbert-Johnson, 2004) impact the classroom performance of students and teachers. These challenges bring about added complexities that urban teachers must be ready to confront. The ability to deal with constant change means incorporating new ways of thinking about complex issues. Simply put, urban teacher leaders must be open to constant learning. They must be able to adjust their ways of thinking and operating to

satisfy the immediate needs of students and families. They must be open to understanding how to support students in the classroom who have experienced family crises. They must be open to learning that each day there will be new opportunities to empower and increase their students' life chances. To be an urban teacher leader, one must be a lifelong learner. Therefore, urban teacher leaders should acknowledge the inevitability of change and embrace their roles as learners.

Recommendations for Teacher and Administrator Preparation Institutions

Teacher education programs should incorporate self-efficacy development into their curricula. Self-efficacy is a personal belief that an individual can accomplish tasks at distinct levels (Bandura, 1997). Developing this belief is crucial to teachers' and leaders' success. To bridge the preparation of teachers into teacher leaders, I am suggesting that teacher leaders must have a healthy sense of self-efficacy. This self-efficacy can be enhanced by practical experience as demonstrated by the teacher leaders in this study who completed administrative internships as part of degree requirements.

I recommend that just as some leadership preparation programs provide internships for developing principals, so too should teacher education programs incorporate teacher leadership internships. In addition to theoretical grounding through coursework, future teacher leaders would experience internships/practica through which self-efficacy would be promoted. Teacher leaders would engage in decision-making experiences supervised by an administrator and a teacher leader to model and process activities related to community engagement, school-wide committee work, and student issues. The incorporation of contextualized learning activities is critical as teacher leaders

work to gain competence, confidence and efficacy. Teacher education programs should work with leadership programs to ensure that prospective administrators also learn the importance and potential of the roles of teacher leaders.

The teacher leaders of this study who had experienced administrative internships described the confidence they had gained through the experiences of practicing decision-making and leadership tasks in real settings. Attaining a new understanding of their competence, teacher leaders were given constructive feedback from their administrative mentors to refine and adjust their developing leadership skills. If teacher leaders were formally trained, their own self-efficacy as teachers could follow a path similar to those of these pre-administrators. Given time in context to engage in leadership activities with support, teacher leaders would have opportunities to develop self-efficacy while practicing the skills of school leadership.

Teacher education and school leadership programs should collaborate in the preparation of teacher leaders. Teacher leaders can be thought of as human capital waiting to be tapped (Barth, 1988). Yet, limited value and recognition has been given to this form of school leadership (Little, 2003). As a result, little to no formal leadership preparation for teacher leaders has evolved. Two questions are raised: How much stronger would these teacher leaders be if they had a more formalized preparation? and, How much stronger would the capacity for urban leadership be if teacher leaders were formally prepared?

For teacher and leadership preparation programs to ignore leadership training for teachers is comparable to schools ignoring whole populations of students (e.g., gifted

students or English language learners). To address this deficit, it is my recommendation that teacher and leadership preparation programs work in tandem to develop curricula, co-teach leadership courses, and facilitate leadership field experiences. These examples of preparation for school leadership can create new leadership perspectives for potential teacher leaders, encourage collaboration between teacher and administrator preparation faculty within higher education, promote a greater sense of how leadership is a function of all personnel, and create a stronger synergy between teachers and leaders to strengthen possibilities for distributed leadership.

Teacher education and school leadership programs should emphasize the importance of mentoring in their coursework and practica. Blank and Kershaw (2009) assert that mentoring generates important support that can influence teacher retention and school leadership capacity. As previously recommended, formalized mentoring programs should be implemented in school context to support the development of teachers and to contribute towards the growth of learning communities. However, if this is to occur, mentoring must be a part of teachers' pre-service experiences and continue throughout the course of their careers. Mentoring should begin in the initial phases of their preparation as part of their coursework and program requirements. Although mentoring should be introduced from the beginning of professional work, the practice and value of mentoring should be reinforced throughout the course of teachers' and school leaders' professional development. Mentoring should be viewed as a continuous form of professional development during all stages of teaching and leadership.

Recommendations for Researchers

Educational researchers should incorporate qualitative approaches when studying teacher leadership. For those who believe in the advancement of leadership practice, I recommend that qualitative research be adopted as a more way of creating knowledge. Klenke (2008) suggests that understanding the *why* that is produced from qualitative research, rather than the *how* and *what* produced from quantitative studies is becoming increasingly important to the leadership field. Furthermore, Klenke concludes that qualitative research offers "more opportunities to explore leadership phenomena in significant depth" (p. 5). Just as the field of leadership has begun to shift in its paradigmatic constructs, moving away from the industrial paradigm (Rost, 1991) to a more inclusive model of operation, so, too, have research traditions begun to shift. Van Maanen (1998) contends that a growing dissatisfaction with information produced by quantitative research in regards to leadership has prompted interest in qualitative research. Due to the encouragement of Van Maanen (1979b) and others (e.g., Creswell, 1994, 1998: Flick, 2002; Silverman, 2004; Sandberg, 2005) the publication of qualitative leadership research has progressed as a form of useful inquiry, but the possibilities have not been fully explored (Klenke, 2008). The use of qualitative research findings will lead to new ways of thinking about leadership as a practice for all.

Educational researchers should utilize narrative approaches to study leadership development. The qualitative paradigm holds the promise of a more in-depth examination of the field of educational leadership (Klenke, 2008). Within this paradigm, narrative forms of inquiry can expand understandings to include participants' stories and

lived experiences. Answering the *why* means taking a deeper look into individuals' lived experiences as they interact in context. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that narrative ways of knowing have become more widely recognized and have gained credibility as a research tool. When researching the practice of educators, narrative inquiry fills the gaps of the quantitative approaches that have been the primary means of creating new knowledge. Narrative inquiry allows researchers to step into the contexts that participants experience to learn about motives, choices, circumstances, beliefs, values, judgments and ways of thinking that can lead researchers to understandings unavailable in other kinds of studies. Education is about the people who engage in teaching and learning. Therefore, we must begin to understand the perspectives of our best practitioners. Narrative inquiry offers unique ways to investigate these perspectives.

Educational researchers should concentrate more attention on the study of urban teacher leadership. The scant research available on urban teacher leaders (Smylie, 1995; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) warrants much greater emphasis from the leadership field. The systematic study of urban teacher leadership should be expanded in order to: a) increase the quality of urban school leadership; b) decrease teacher attrition rates that impact student learning, school effectiveness, and leadership capacity; and c) increase the knowledge base of all teachers. To focus the investigation of phenomena related to urban teacher leadership, questions like the following should be addressed:

- How do urban teacher leaders work through change processes?
- What role does mentoring play in developing urban teacher leadership?

- Why and how do administrators select/identify certain urban teacher leaders?
- How do teacher leaders manage their longevity in the urban context?
- How do gender and cultural understanding impact urban teacher leadership development and practice?

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the metamorphosis of five urban teachers into teacher leaders. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this work offer ways to advance educational practice and promote the development of future urban teacher leaders as a means to increase the leadership capacity in urban schools (Jacobson, 2005; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Nevarez & Wood, 2007; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Recommendations address considerations for urban administrators, urban teacher leaders, institutions that prepare teachers and administrators, and researchers interested in advancing the knowledge base related to this important form of leadership.

Reflections

To conclude this dissertation, I offer my own reflections on the experiences of this study. Over the course of the last three years, I have been immersed in the study of urban teacher leadership. I have reflected throughout the research process and a summary of these musings is offered as a formal closure to this dissertation; however, my efforts as an educator will continue as I work to support others in the development of their professional practice.

For other novice researchers who plan to conduct research in which they interact closely with their participants, I suggest thoughtful consideration be given to their abilities to separate their roles as researchers, colleagues, and friends. Novice researchers should be aware of the responsibility they have for protecting the confidentiality of their participants. Utilizing public information versus keeping private information confidential can be a precarious balancing act. I worked with all of the participants in their roles as mentors of university pre-service teachers before and after the study was conducted. My responsibility to maintain confidentiality made me acutely aware of teacher leaders' trust and the responsibilities I had to them as an ethical researcher. At the same time, had I not had these prior relationships, I believe that the depth of sharing would not have been as rich and honest. Researchers must be cognizant of the advantages and disadvantages of selecting known participants prior to taking on this responsibility.

As a developing qualitative researcher who has quantitative tendencies, I have much greater appreciation for the qualitative realm of research and the nuances and subtleties that can be illuminated through this powerful form of inquiry. I hope that my work in the qualitative realm will encourage other leaders to push the boundaries and to explore facets of leadership that have long been hidden by the limited scope of quantitative research.

I think leadership scholars should also look to other fields (e.g., sociology, psychology, or other disciplines within education) to partner with established qualitative researchers. The purpose of partnering would be to take advantage of existing expert knowledge and to make the learning curve less steep, while maintaining the rigor of

educational leadership investigations. If not for my mentor, who is an experienced qualitative researcher, I believe my research experience would have been much more arduous, conflicted, and less successful. Qualitative research is not easy work for anyone, and especially not for novice researchers. An experienced mentor can ease the process and enhance opportunities for authentic results. Only those individuals who are deeply committed to examining issues should attempt this work. I have learned a great deal because of the expertise of my advisor, but I have much more to understand regarding the intricacies of this work.

As a teacher educator, I now realize more than ever that I have a duty to my university students to advocate for the tandem preparation of those who aspire to be school administrators and teacher leaders. Many university education programs espouse that they are developing *teachers as leaders*, but of those programs that claim this, few are infusing leadership curricula with teacher preparation courses. How can leadership development be truly encouraged if preparation programs do not accept the responsibility of educating future teachers to their fullest capability? As part of pre-service students' fullest capability, leadership should be addressed and included in their preparation process. For universities to claim that they are preparing teachers as leaders, much more is needed. At this juncture, committed educators are taking the initiative to find ways to step into leadership roles despite this gap in their preparation programs. This void in teacher and leadership preparation must be addressed if school improvement is to advance.

In addition, as a better informed teacher educator, I can work with improved understanding of the influences that can impact pre-service teachers as they make decisions and career choices about teaching in urban and non-urban schools. I will continue to promote consideration of social justice and critical pedagogy as important ideas to broaden pre-service teachers' perspectives on working in urban schools. I believe this kind of knowledge will further promote role-taking in teachers, providing frameworks for understanding the perspectives of others, engaging in thoughtful communication, and advancing their cultural competence.

I am encouraged by my participants' beliefs in the powers of mentoring and networking with peers. For young teachers to grow as teacher leaders, they must have strong role models from which they can draw information, examples, experiences, a sense of role-taking, cultural competence, a sense of self-efficacy, commitment, and care. Learning that seeking out information and input from others is not a weakness, but a strength, is critical.

The wide range of practices participants of this study embraced reinforced what the literature identifies as good practice and positive teacher leader traits. When Dorothy discussed the plights of two of her most challenging students, I immediately recalled my own urban experience of addressing mistrust and cultural misperceptions. When Penny spoke of her initiative in seeking out professional development, I recalled the various opportunities I have had to learn more about my responsibilities as a leader. Joan and Patty's discussions of their need to decompress and reflect reminded me of my drives home, during which I talked out the day in one-way discussions with myself. And Amy

reminded me of how it felt to have the supportive relationships of team members to work through issues and to have a sense of belonging among peers. In my experience with formal leadership, I recall my job as a technology coordinator as a lonely job. However, like the participants of my study, my role as a teacher leader was not. In becoming a leader, educators should not be expected to isolate themselves from others. Rather, being a school leader should be a time of engagement and collaboration.

As a former administrator who planned, implemented and conducted professional development, understanding teacher leader stories would have been a powerful tool in my practice. Instead of utilizing valuable first-hand knowledge from teacher leaders, I primarily relied upon mandates, budgets, and decisions from school system administrators. Comparing what I understand now with my previous practices, teacher leaders should have been more actively involved and routinely consulted as I made professional development decisions.

Joan, Dorothy, Patty, Penny, and Amy were very caring and highly insightful participants. I was able to relive various moments of their lives through the stories they shared with me. These stories were sometimes exciting, painful, funny, thoughtful, sad, and triumphant. Even at the different stages of their careers, their clear purpose and direction provided a glimpse into the passion they held for their profession. The pride and affirmation they projected is a testament to their caring, commitment, and the sense of responsibility they hold for their roles as teachers and teacher leaders. Their amazing stories are now a part of me that I deeply appreciate and will use as life lessons as I move forward in my future professional endeavors.

My participants' sense of possibility and openness to change promoted climates of encouragement for others who were challenged by their experiences in urban schools. As agents of hope, these teacher leaders worked in overt and covert ways to promote their schools for the sake of enhancing their students' life chances. Their professional development journeys provided insight into the influences that make them strong urban teacher leaders. They generously allowed me opportunities to explore their personal journeys of development as teacher leaders. For this, I am truly grateful.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Summary of Teacher Leader Characteristics from the Literature

Characteristics	Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann (2002)	Day (2002)	Fullan (2001a)	Katzenmeyer & Moller (2001)	Lambert et al. (2002)	Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1999)	Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles (2000)	Harris & Muijs (2005)	Murphy (2007)	Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond (2003)
Convey convictions about a better world	x									
Articulates a positive future for students	x	x							x	x
Shows a genuine interest in students' lives	x	x	x						x	
Contributes to an image of teachers as professionals who make a difference	x	x				x	x		x	x
Gains respect and trust in the broader community	x		x			x				
Demonstrates tolerance and reasonableness in difficult situations	x	x	x		x	x	x			
Strives for authenticity in their teaching, learning, and assessment practices	x				x					
Creates learning experiences based upon student's needs	x									
Connects teaching, learning and	x	x	x				x	x	x	x

Characteristics	Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann (2002)	Day (2002)	Fullan (2001a)	Katzenmeyer & Moller (2001)	Lambert et al. (2002)	Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1999)	Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles (2000)	Harris & Muijs (2005)	Murphy (2007)	Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond (2003)
assessments to students' futures										
Seeks deep understanding of tacit teaching and learning processes	x	x	x		x	x		x		x
Values teaching as a key profession as shaping meaning systems	x	x	x	x	x		x			
Facilitates communities of learning through organization-wide processes	x									
Encourages a shared, schoolwide approach to pedagogy (teaching, learning, and assessment)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Approaches professional learning as consciousness raising about complex issues	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Facilitates understanding across diverse groups while also	x		x			x	x			

Characteristics	Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann (2002)	Day (2002)	Fullan (2001a)	Katzenmeyer & Moller (2001)	Lambert et al. (2002)	Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1999)	Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles (2000)	Harris & Muijs (2005)	Murphy (2007)	Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond (2003)
respecting individual differences										
Synthesizes new ideas out of colleagues, dialogues and activities	x	x	x		x	x	x			x
Confronts barriers in the school's culture and structure	x									
Tests the boundaries rather than accept the status quo	x		x			x	x			
Engages administrators as potential sources of assistance and advocacy	x			x		x	x			x
Accesses political processes in and out of school	x		x					x		
Stands up for children, especially marginalized individuals or groups	x	x								
Translate ideas into sustainable systems of actions	x						x			

Characteristics	Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann (2002)	Day (2002)	Fullan (2001a)	Katzenmeyer & Moller (2001)	Lambert et al. (2002)	Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1999)	Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles (2000)	Harris & Muijs (2005)	Murphy (2007)	Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond (2003)
Organizes complex tasks effectively	x		x				x	x		
Maintains focus on issues of importance	x		x		x	x				x
Nurtures networks of support	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Manages issues of time and pressure through priority setting	x	x					x			x
Nurtures a culture of success	x			x			x	x	x	
Acts on opportunities for others to gain success and recognition	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	
Adopts a no-blame attitude when things go wrong	x	x	x			x	x			
Creates a sense of community identity and pride	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x

Appendix B: Administrator Nomination Letter

Dear Administrator,

As part of my study, *Narratives of the Development of Urban Teacher Leaders*, I am seeking nominations of teacher leaders from you for the purpose of identifying participants for this research project. The principal, administrative assistant, and curriculum instructional facilitator are invited to offer nominations of teacher leaders from your faculty. All nominations will be held in confidence. No school personnel will have access to this information. Only myself and my faculty advisor will know the outcomes of the individual administrator responses. Once the nominations have been reviewed and a consensus of the nominations is reached, those participants will be invited to participate in this study.

Attached you will find a nomination form. On this form:

(1) Rank order four teachers who exhibit strong leadership skills (strongest listed first);
(2) Place an X beside each characteristic exhibited; and
(3) Return the completed form sealed in the attached envelope.

If you have questions about the study or the nomination process, you may contact me at ---------- or via email at ----------.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Susan Newsom

Appendix C: Teacher Leadership Nomination Form

Teacher Leadership Nomination Form For the Study of Narratives of the Development of Urban Teacher Leaders

Circle your position: Principal Administrative Assistant Curriculum Generalist School: _____

1. Please confidentially complete this survey. No teachers or other school personnel will have access to the information.
2. Below each space under Name, list in order of strength the teachers on your campus whom you consider to be teacher leaders.
3. Then under each name, place an X in each box to indicate characteristics the nominated teachers have exhibited. When finished, please return the completed nomination form in the attached envelope sealed. Do not include your name on this form.

Teacher Leader Roles & Characteristics	**Name**	**Name**	**Name**	**Name**
Collaborator				
Collaborates with peers to build a network of support.				
Coordinates with administrators for assistance and support in various capacities.				
Fosters supportive professional relationships through mentoring.				
Encourages a team concept by promoting individual and group accomplishments and recognition.				
Builds a sense of community among peers to create an optimal learning environment.				
Problem Solver				
Contributes to school-wide shared decision-making.				
Exhibits patience and prudence in challenging circumstances.				
Participates in coordination of school-improvement process.				
Uses dialogue with colleagues to analyze and resolve issues.				
Envisions short and long-term needs of school.				
Engages in school-wide curriculum alignment and analysis of student performance.				

Teacher Leader Roles & Characteristics	Name	Name	Name	Name
Life-long Learner				
Practices self-reflection to seek deep understanding of teaching and learning methods.				
Makes learning relevant to students' present and future lives.				
Actively engages in professional development activities.				
Sustains membership in professional organizations.				
Models an image of teacher professionalism as one who makes a difference in the lives of children.				

Appendix D: Campus Consent Forms

Dear Mr(s). _____,

My name is Susan Newsom and I am a doctoral candidate at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. As a partial requirement of my degree attainment, I am seeking permission to conduct a research study, *Narratives of the Development of Urban Teacher Leaders,* on your campus. _____ has granted permission for this study to be conducted. Attached you will find a copy of their approval letter.

Research on urban elementary teacher leadership is limited. The purpose of this study is to illuminate critical variables that contribute to leadership assertion choices, reveal possible mechanisms for encouraging leadership within future teachers in the urban context, and provide insight for building leadership roles in the school environment for administrators and school personnel who coordinate professional development activities. Five teacher leaders from three urban elementary schools are the intended participants. Data collection will consist of three to five interviews and three journal reflections provided by each participant between January – May, 2008. A maximum of two follow-up interviews may be needed to clarify responses. These would be conducted in August – October, 2008. Each interview will be completed at the convenience of the teacher and in a secure and private space on the school campus as deemed appropriate by the school administration.

The intent of this letter is to request your permission to conduct this study on your campus. Participants and their schools will not be named in the dissertation. An alias for the school system will be used as well.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at ---------- or ----------. I look forward to learning about your decision regarding this research opportunity.

Your consideration and assistance is greatly appreciated.
Sincerely,

Susan Newsom

Please sign and retain a copy of this letter if you are willing allow your school and faculty to participate in this study.

I have read the description of this study and agree to allow *Narratives of the Development of Urban Teacher Leaders* to be conducted on the campus of_____(School).

Principal's name (print) _____
Principal's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form for Narratives of the Development of Urban Teacher Leaders

You are invited to participate in a research study. Please know that your work as a teacher leader is highly valued. The purpose of this study is to obtain a rich and thorough understanding of your personal professional journey as a teacher leader. You have been nominated to participate in this study by your school administrators based upon criteria provided to them. Below you will find a description of the study.

Data Collection Activities

Your participation in this study will include the following:

1. Individual Teacher Interviews

Three interviews will be conducted during January – May, 2008. Follow-up interviews may be conducted during August – October, 2008. Each interview will focus upon your development as a teacher leader over the course of your career. Each of the three interviews, lasting between 45 – 60 minutes, will be audio recorded and transcribed. If you would feel more comfortable, interview questions can be provided to you prior to the date of the scheduled interview. Later transcriptions of your interviews will be provided for you to add or delete information, if needed. The interviews will be held at your convenience. Unless otherwise requested by you, all interviews will be conducted in a secure, private area on your school campus with only you and the researcher present. Two additional interviews may be conducted at the conclusion of the study to ensure clarity and understanding of shared content from all of the previous interviews; and

2. Keeping a Reflective Journal

Three journal entries over the duration of the entire interview process will be submitted to the researcher. Journal entries may be kept in either digital or hand-written format. Entries submitted in hand-written format will be converted into digital text. After each interview, journal entries will be completed and returned to the researcher approximately two weeks after the previous interview. Each journal reflection will provide you an opportunity to expound upon shared insights and post-interview reflections of your personal development as a teacher leader. The length of the reflections should be approximately one to two pages in length. These entries will be integrated into the ensuing interview process. Ultimately, your personal narrative will be composed from information provided from your interviews and journal reflections. Journal reflections will be returned to you at the end of the study.

Risk of Participation

There is minimal risk involved in participating in this study. All audio recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study via shredding or digital deletion. Required University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board forms will be stored in a secure area on the University of Tennessee campus for a period of three years prior to disposal.

Summarizations of your personal narrative will be shared as part of the data for this study. Your responses, in addition to responses from other participants, will also be combined as part of the findings for this dissertation. The findings from this study may also be used as data for subsequent journal articles or professional presentations.

Benefits

This study will generate a narrative that may illuminate critical variables that contribute to leadership assertion choices, reveal possible mechanisms for encouraging leadership within future teachers in the urban context, and provide insight for building leadership roles in the school environment for administrators and school personnel who coordinate professional development activities. Specific benefits for you include opportunities to raise an awareness of teacher leadership roles and to reflect upon your own practices as a teacher leader. No direct financial benefits will be available to participants in this study. However, you may have an opportunity to collaborate with the researcher in making future professional presentations based upon the study's data.

Confidentiality

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be used in this study; instead a pseudonym will be assigned to the transcriptions of the audio files of your interviews and your journal reflections will also be labeled as such. Only the researcher, the University of Tennessee faculty advisor, who will oversee this study and a transcriptionist will be allowed to see your individual responses. The information in the study will be stored in a secure file cabinet during the course of the study.

Contact

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Susan Newsom, at ---------- If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466.

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed upon your request.

Consent

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

Participant's name (print) _____

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's name (print) _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix F: Initial Interview Participant Interview Protocol

1. Why did you choose to be a teacher?

2. Tell me about your teaching career and how it has led you to this point in your professional life.

3. What critical junctures in your career have shaped your thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs? How did these events affect your practice?

4. What are your own perceptions about your role as a school leader? What would you consider your greatest accomplishment as a teacher and why?

5. How do you feel when other teachers look to you for assistance and direction?

6. Why do you think you are perceived as a leader?

7. What professional skills are important to your leadership role? How have those skills evolved?

8. How did your administrator(s) support you in your leadership growth process?

9. How should the roles of teacher leaders and those of school principals interact? What are some important characteristics of their daily interactions?

10. How can teacher leaders and school administrators' relationships work toward improving student achievement?

11. Could you describe the ideal teacher leader? Please include personality traits and practices in your description.

VITA

Susan Kirkland Newsom was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and raised in the Delta of eastern Arkansas. She attended the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1986 in Elementary Education with a minor in Library Science. In 1997 she earned a Master of Science degree in Educational Administration from Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Susan has worked in school systems in Arkansas and Tennessee as a kindergarten teacher, a school librarian, and as a district administrator. After moving to Knoxville, Tennessee, Susan accepted a position as an intern supervisor at the University of Tennessee. During that time she worked as a clinical instructor with pre-service teachers who were preparing to work in the urban/multicultural context. During the 2009-2010 school year, Susan also served as an elementary education program coordinator. In May 2010, Susan will earn her doctorate in Education with a concentration in Educational Administration with an added emphasis in urban leadership. In June 2010, Susan will continue her work as a teacher educator as Assistant Director of VolsTeach, and Research Assistant Professor in the Center for Enhancing Education in Math and Science at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.